



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



FRIDAY — 31 JUL 2020

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HEADLINE	07/31 Iran supreme leader: won't negotiate w/US
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/supreme-leader-iran-negotiate-us-72099098
GIST	<p>TEHRAN, Iran -- Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Friday his country will not negotiate with the United States because America would only use talks for propaganda purposes.</p> <p>The Trump administration has said it is willing to talk with Iran "with no preconditions," but that the U.S. will continue its campaign of pressure against the Islamic Republic.</p> <p>In a televise speech marking the Eid al-Adha holiday, Khamenei said President Donald Trump would benefit from talks, saying Trump wants to "use negotiations with us for propaganda like negotiations with North Korea." Khamenei was referring to talks between Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong un.</p> <p>Trump unilaterally withdrew America from the nuclear accord between Iran and Western powers in May 2018. Iran later responded by slowly abandoning nearly every aspect of the agreement, though it still allows U.N. inspectors access to its nuclear sites.</p> <p>Trump has maintained that the deal needs to be renegotiated because it didn't address Iran's ballistic missile program or its involvement in regional conflicts. The other signatories to the nuclear deal — Germany, France, Britain, China and Russia — have been struggling to keep it alive.</p> <p>Khamenei said the U.S. wants Iran to give up its nuclear program, defense facilities and regional authority at the negotiating table.</p> <p>He said economic sanctions imposed on Iran by the U.S. are a crime against Iran. "The sanctions are apparently against Iran's ruling system, but (in fact) they are against the Iranian people inside." He said Iranians suffering under the sanctions affecting the economy inevitable would stand up against the ruling system.</p> <p>A sharp rise in subsidized gasoline prices led to four days of unrest in cities and towns across Iran in November, in which Amnesty International said more than 300 people were killed in clashes with police and security forces.</p> <p>Tehran has yet to release any official statistics about the scale of the unrest, though in June the government acknowledged that security forces shot and killed protesters. A lawmaker said 230 people were killed in the anti-government protests.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/31 Portland became hotbed for clashes
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/portland-nations-hotbed-clashes-protesters-federal-agents/story?id=72050134
GIST	<p>In the immediate aftermath of George Floyd's death in May, Portland Police Chief Jami Resch issued a statement she had hoped would help keep a lid on rising tensions in her city by condemning the fatal police encounter in Minneapolis as running "contrary to our fundamental duty to protect and serve."</p> <p>Two months after making the statement, Resch is no longer the top cop, having resigned in June and replaced by a Black police lieutenant, and Oregon's largest city has become the nation's major flashpoint for protests and violent clashes with law enforcement officers.</p>

In addition to being a rallying point for a continued protest movement, Portland has also become a symbol, as Seattle's Capitol Hill Organized Protest zone (or CHOP, for short) was before it, of liberal cities out of control, besieged by crime and lawlessness.

The images of people in the streets, fires burning and clashes with law enforcement have become wallpaper in some circles and were seized on by the Trump administration as a reason to step in, as the president has threatened to do in Chicago and elsewhere.

Some demonstrators say [Trump](#)'s deployment of federal agents in camouflage and their aggressive tactics, including the use of tear gas and scooping up protesters in unmarked vans, has fueled the unrest and bolstered the resolve of some protesters to take a more militant stance.

In any event, a divide has emerged in Portland between those who are looking to peacefully protest police brutality and call for police reform and those looking to foment chaos and violence. And whereas other cities, such as New York, which saw large protests, attacks on police officers, looting and vandalism in the wake of Floyd's death, have managed to stabilize the situation, Portland has not.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown said the federal officers have "acted as an occupying force [and] brought violence."

In a response on Thursday, Trump tweeted that Brown "isn't doing her job."

"She must clear out, and in some cases arrest, the Anarchists & Agitators in Portland," Trump said in his tweet. "If she can't do it, the Federal Government will do it for her. We will not be leaving until there is safety!"

Here's what we know about the situation in Portland:

Standoff with federal agents

On Wednesday night, the 62nd consecutive day of demonstrations in Portland, protesters clashed once again with federal agents guarding the Mark O. Hatfield U.S. Courthouse, which has become a focal point of the civil unrest. Around 11 p.m., federal agents in riot gear fired tear gas and stun grenades at protesters attempting to breach a fence around the courthouse after agents warned them to disperse. Several arrests were made as the standoff continued into Thursday morning.

The clashes came hours after Brown, a Democrat, announced on Twitter that she had spoken with Vice President Mike Pence and an agreement to withdrawal federal agents from the city was struck provided that local officials could assure that federal buildings would be protected -- the primary reason agents from Customs and Border Protection and the Federal Protective Service were dispatched.

But in a warning to Brown and other local officials, Chad Wolf, acting secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, said federal agents would remain in the city until it is clear that state troopers and Portland police have gotten a handle on the violence.

Federal officials, including Attorney General William Barr, have defended the presence and tactics of the agents saying they were needed to prevent the spread of "violent attacks on federal courts."

Brown agreed to deploy state troopers to Portland if federal agents would move out, and troopers were set to take over those duties Thursday afternoon, [according to Oregon Live](#).

"We are not removing any law enforcement while our facilities and law enforcement remain under attack," Wolf said.

Whether the move to withdraw federal agents will help de-escalate violence in Portland still remains uncertain.

Split in approach to protest

In recent days as vandalism, attacks on police and fires ignited in the streets have increased, protesters have become split between those bent on destruction and those who believe the peaceful actions of the Black Lives Matter movement are being drowned out by demonstrators and agitators pushing violence as a means to achieving their goals.

On Tuesday night, the difference in philosophy played out in the streets of Portland when a white protester dressed in riot gear set a sizable fire in the middle of a street. A Black Lives Matter protester, who identified himself to ABC News as Najee, ran over and put the blaze out in an incident caught on video. The white protester in full riot gear responded by yelling, "light the fire again!" A frustrated Najee yelled back, trying to explain that inciting violence and destruction was taking away from the BLM message.

The white protester responded, "they burned down one police building in Minneapolis and they defunded the police department."

E.D. Mondaine, president of the Portland NAACP branch, wrote in an opinion piece in the Washington Post last week that as the demonstrations have continued daily in Portland since Floyd's death on May 25, "many people with their own agendas are co-opting, and distracting attention from, what should be our central concern: the Black Lives Matter movement."

"Unfortunately, 'spectacle' is now the best way to describe Portland's protests," Mondaine wrote. "Vandalizing government buildings and hurling projectiles at law enforcement draw attention -- but how do these actions stop police from killing black people?"

Mondaine said even the so-called Wall of Moms, a group of mostly white women who have turned out in large numbers in Portland to protest police brutality and form an arm-to-arm barrier between the protesters and the federal agents, could be hurting the overall goal of the BLM movement.

"This might ease the consciences of white, affluent women who have previously been silent in the face of Black oppression, but it's fair to ask: Are they really furthering the cause of justice, or is this another example of white co-optation?" Mondaine wrote.

But Bev Barnum, a mother of two teenagers, said she was motivated to organize the "Wall of Moms" on Facebook out of motherly instinct, not a political agenda.

"As soon as you become a mom, something is triggered in you. It's primal," Barnum said in an interview with ABC's "Good Morning America." "It doesn't matter if it's your kid or not, you're going to help them. If you see a kid drowning, you're going to jump into the water."

"I'm proud of us," she said. "We're not throwing bricks. We're not throwing water bottles. We're not being violent."

Governor rejects call for national guard

Portland, where Blacks comprise just 6% of the population, erupted in violent protests just three days after video surfaced of a white police officer digging his knee into the back of Floyd's neck as he repeatedly yelled "I can't breathe" and called out for his dead mother before falling unconscious and later dying in a hospital.

A May 28 vigil for Floyd in Portland took a destructive turn when a small group splintered off from a protest march, broke into a juvenile detention center and set it on fire. Several businesses, including an Apple Store, were looted, prompting police to declare a riot.

The following day, Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler declared a state of emergency and announced a citywide 8 p.m. curfew. But as the first night of the curfew approached, more businesses were looted and fires were set. Police deployed tear gas and ended up arresting 51 people for disorderly conduct.

Wheeler and Oregon's top federal prosecutor, U.S. Attorney Billy Williams, asked Gov. Brown on June 1 to deploy the Oregon National Guard to Portland. At the time, Wheeler, also a Democrat, said, "We need help, we need more bodies to stop this senseless violence."

But Brown refused to send the National Guard despite Williams informing her that there were "organized efforts" intent on creating chaos.

Amidst the turmoil, Resch, the police chief at the time, resigned just days after local activists criticized her for having an all-white command staff. She was replaced in June by Chuck Lovell, a Black veteran lieutenant of the police department whom Resch endorsed as "the exact right person at the exact right moment."

A day after Lovell became chief, a U.S. District judge issued a temporary restraining order in a lawsuit filed on behalf of two protesters, barring police from using tear gas unless lives were in danger. A little over a week later, the Portland City Council voted to slash \$27 million from the police department's budget.

Despite promises of reform from the police department and city officials, protests continue to grow violent and destructive.

A June 30 protest march on the headquarters of the Portland Police Association devolved into violence when demonstrators allegedly threw rocks and other objects at police, who declared a riot and used tear gas to turn back the crowd despite the federal judge's order, which banned the use of tear gas unless lives were at stake.

Over the July 4 weekend, Trump and the Department of Homeland Security launched rapid deployment teams to protect federal monuments in cities around the country. The president later expanded the role of federal agents, saying he had "no choice" but to "surge" federal law enforcement into American cities to fight violent crime.

Navy vet beaten

During one of the confrontations in Portland, Navy veteran Christopher David, 53, was beaten with a baton by a federal agent in a July 18 incident that was caught on cellphone video that went viral. David told ABC News that he went to the Mark O. Hatfield U.S. Courthouse in hopes of speaking to the federal agents after viewing a video of men in combat fatigues with no insignia "abducting citizens off the streets of Portland and stuffing them into unmarked vans."

"This is shocking to me. It's completely shocking. I can't believe it's happening actually," David said. "I wanted to ask them why they were no longer honoring their oath of office, why they were no longer honoring the constitution because what they were doing is blatantly unconstitutional."

Instead of seeing David, who at the time of the beating was dressed in a Naval Academy sweatshirt and a Navy ball cap, as a concerned veteran, he said they saw him as "a target."

"If they're going to gas pregnant moms, they're going to beat up an old vet. It doesn't matter to them," said David, who suffered a broken hand in the incident. "I wasn't a human being to them. I was just a protester. I wasn't like them. I wasn't a real person."

In a statement to ABC News, the U.S. Marshals Service said David "presented a threat to deputy U.S. Marshals" by failing to obey commands to back up and trying to enter the courthouse grounds.

"Based upon the circumstances at the time incident, the deputies believed that the force used was necessary to protect themselves and others from physical harm," reads the statement from U.S. Marshals.

	<p>Even Wheeler, the mayor of Portland, has not been immune to the aggressive tactics of federal agents. During a July 23 protest outside the courthouse, Wheeler was among a crowd of protesters who were tear-gassed by federal officers.</p> <p>"I want to thank the thousands of you who have come out to oppose the Trump administration's occupation of this city," Wheeler told the crowd moments before tear gas was deployed. "The reason this is important is it is not just happening in Portland ... we're on the front line here in Portland."</p> <p>The violence between protesters and federal agents escalated last weekend, prompting Portland police to once again declare a riot early Sunday when protesters breached the reinforced fence around the federal courthouse. Federal agents guarding the building deployed tear gas on the demonstrators, who officials alleged hurled projectiles and fireworks at the agents.</p> <p>Andre Miller, a Black Lives Matter protester who was hit in the head by a tear gas canister during July 21 demonstration, addressed protesters at a rally in Portland on Wednesday night before federal agents deployed tear gas again to disperse the crowd. Miller, with his head bandaged, made a point of putting the focus back on the Black Lives Matter movement.</p> <p>"I want y'all to make sure that Black Lives Matter is your number one priority," said Miller. "This is just the beginning."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 Poll: half support 50% cut to SPD
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/new-poll-says-more-than-50-percent-of-people-support-defunding-seattle-police-department
GIST	<p>A new telephone poll conducted last week indicate more than half of those surveyed support a 50 percent defunding of the Seattle Police department but don't think the City Council is the best group to do it.</p> <p>It results come out on the same day Council Member Kshama Sawant announced her proposal on how the City should spend the \$85 million that represents a 50 percent cut of SPD's remaining budget for 2020.</p> <p>The poll conducted by EMC Research for a 'group of businesses' involved 500 people who were considered likely voters. It revealed 53 percent of those polled support a cut of 50 percent and shift that money to social service and community-based programs.</p> <p>Thirty-six percent said they "strongly" support the cut. Forty-five percent said they oppose the cut with 29 percent saying they 'strongly' oppose the cut.</p> <p>But the poll showed disagreement on who is best to execute any cuts to the department.</p> <p>Sixty-one percent trust Police Chief Carmen Best as the best person to do that job followed by Mayor Jenny Durkan at 49 percent with the "Defund the Police Movement" and the Seattle City Council tied at 47 percent</p> <p>"For the political establishment, this is way past the time to act, this is not the time to wait, this is the time to act," Sawant said during her announcement Thursday morning announcing where she would like to see SPD funds reallocated for the remainder of 2020.</p> <p>The largest portion, \$35 million of her proposed \$85 million cut would be reallocated to funding affordable working-class housing in communities that face displacement and gentrification.</p> <p>Another \$18 million could go to funding Black and Brown restorative justice programs and alternative public safety models that would replace home policing is done in many areas of the city.</p>

	<p>Her cuts are basically 50 percent across all budget lines except for the SPD's Navigation Team which would be eliminated. She says they are responsible for the 'inhumane' sweeps of homeless camps.</p> <p>She would let the police decide who and what should be cut. An analysis by the Mayor's Central Budget Office says her cuts could amount to layoffs involving 1800 of the departments 2200 employees and would include laying off 681 patrol officers.</p> <p>"We have yet to see a concrete proposal from any of the other council members" said Sawant. Other council proposals are expected to be presented at Friday's Budget Committee meeting. Seven of the nine council members have pledge to cutting SPD's budget by 50%, but whether those cuts would happen this year is still yet to be determined.</p> <p>Sawant did respond to a recent radio and TV attack ad by the Seattle Police Officer's Guild. The ad calls on the council not to defund SPD to the level Sawant is promoting.</p> <p>"What they are demonizing is not me personally but the movement that is demanding police accountability" Sawant said.</p> <p>The poll also showed division on who had the best plan to cut SPD. Forty-three percent it was the Mayor's plan, 32 percent said it would be the council, which has not formalized a plan and 21 percent said they wanted no cuts at all.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 King Co. Search, Rescue: record month
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/officials-say-july-is-busiest-month-on-record-for-search-and-rescue-in-king-county
GIST	<p>King County Search and Rescue officials say this July is the busiest month on record for rescues. Officials say they've seen 54 rescues in the last three weeks, and the summer hiking season is just kicking off.</p> <p>"The entire system is taxed and overwhelmed right now," said Jen Brenes.</p> <p>Brenes is the president of King County Search and Rescue.</p> <p>She says people are packing into parks and trails, pushing them to capacity. She says COVID-19 is a big reason for the increase in numbers.</p> <p>"There's no movie theaters; there's no restaurants; there's no places for people to go to recreate. It's pushing them to outdoor recreation," she said.</p> <p>She says because of this there are more inexperienced hikers on trails, which leads to more rescues.</p> <p>Brenes says this is creating issues for the volunteer ran and donation funded King County Search and Rescue team who constantly work to bring people safely back home from dangerous situations.</p> <p>"It means they {hikers} shouldn't be counting on us. Because it's a possibility that our response times are going to be slower. It's a possibility that we can't provide the depth of resources on any one call because we're spread thin," she said.</p> <p>Brenes says if you plan on going hiking, make sure you're prepared and always tell someone your plan.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 South King Co. emerges virus hotspot
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/south-king-county-is-a-hotspot-for-covid-19
GIST	<p>BURIEN, Wash. - Communities in South King County are experiencing a higher percentage of tests coming back positive for COVID-19.</p> <p>Inside Designing Diva's Hair Salon, Vivian Bentley feels like she's at war with the monster virus.</p> <p>"Really washing down everything I touch, everything my client touches," Bentley said.</p> <p>But no amount of cleaning can make her feel 100% safe.</p> <p>"It's one of those lingering thoughts in your head, I hope I don't get it today," Bentley said.</p> <p>Bentley is closely following the data that shows her city of Burien and other South King County areas seeing the highest percentage of positive cases of COVID-19.</p> <p>It doesn't necessarily mean there are more deaths but it does mean there is a higher level of the virus looming in those communities.</p> <p>For example South Auburn is seeing a 12% postivity rate.</p> <p>Other jurisdictions in South King County with high rates include Kent, SeaTac, Tukwila, Federal Way and North Highline. At least one in 10 people in those areas who got tested for the virus received a positive result.</p> <p>White Center and Burien are also seeing spikes.</p> <p>"People listen to the science, do what the science says," Bentley said.</p> <p>Data shows African Americans, Hispanics and Pacific Islanders are disproportionately impacted with hospitalizations significantly higher than whites or Asians.</p> <p>"Petrified because I can bring it home, I am taking care of my 73-year-old mother," Bentley said.</p> <p>Bentley says she wishes she didn't have to work since her job requires contact. But she has no choice.</p> <p>"Somebody's got to pay the bills," Bentley said.</p> <p>COVID-19 is underscoring glaring inequities.</p> <p>Health experts say more low-income people live in South King County and work in service jobs.</p> <p>In less affluent communities, there are fewer resources and access to healthy foods as well as inadequate healthcare. Those factors can often become the root of underlying health conditions.</p> <p>Bentley says in the black community, multigenerational families often live under the same roof in order to afford rent.</p> <p>"A lot of communities live together," Bentley said.</p> <p>That allows the virus to spread more.</p> <p>It's going to get worse before it gets better, hopefully, we can bridge the gap," Bentley said.</p> <p>Bentley says although the data is scary, it is also vital because it keeps people aware. It also sheds light on where leaders need to focus their energy.</p>

	<p>The Burien business owner says last week's mask giveaway in South King County was a good effort but she hopes those events would be more frequent.</p> <p>She also says cities need to provide more information on grants and loans for businesses to stay afloat.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/31 Teachers extra burden: kids mental health
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2020/07/31/covid-online-school-kids-mental-health-teachers/5529846002/
GIST	<p>When her South Carolina high school went online this spring, Maya Green struggled through the same emotions as many of her fellow seniors: She missed her friends. Her online assignments were too easy. She struggled to stay focused.</p> <p>But Green, 18, also found herself working harder for the teachers who knew her well and cared about her.</p> <p>"My school doesn't do a ton of lessons on social and emotional learning," said Green, who just graduated from Charleston County School of the Arts, a magnet school, and is headed to Stanford University. "But I grew up in this creative writing program, and I'm really close to my teachers there, and we had at least one purposeful conversation about my emotions after we moved online."</p> <p>From the other teachers, Green didn't hear much to support her mental health.</p> <p>This was a common complaint among parents when classes went online in March to stem the spread of coronavirus. With the sudden halt to in-person learning, many students missed their friends, yearned to be out of the house, developed erratic sleep habits and drove their (often, working) parents crazy. On top of that, many were dealing with the trauma of sick or dying family members, economic hardship and disruption to the life they once had.</p> <p>As the pandemic drags on, it's clear that not all kids are all right. Nearly 3 in 10 parents said their child is experiencing emotional or mental harm because of social distancing and school closures, according to a nationwide Gallup poll in June.</p> <p>"'Unmoored' is the best way I can describe it," said Michael Rich, associate professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School. He's seen a rise in young patients with anxiety and depression during the pandemic.</p> <p>"They don't feel like getting up and going to another Zoom class," Rich said. "They don't feel like finishing their college applications."</p> <p>As more districts are electing to start the school year virtually, teachers will have to get better at delivering new academic content online while also meeting students' social and emotional needs.</p> <p>Schools, Rich said, should think about using the virtual environment to create new relationships between teachers and students.</p> <p>"Not just one where kids can get help with algebra, but where kids are talking to teachers about what's going on."</p> <p>Fitting it all in: Academic and emotional learning</p> <p>In normal times, many schools didn't deliberately set aside time for teaching non-academic "soft skills" such as empathy, determination and self-care. That makes ramping up the focus in a virtual setting, amid a set of challenging circumstances, even more daunting.</p>

But the world is a stressful place right now, given the global health crisis, economic downturn and [continued protests over racial injustice](#). It's important for school staff to nurture emotional connections, child psychologists and mental-health experts say, even if [addressing students' academic slide](#) seems more urgent.

There's a lot of fear and consternation and confusion, but not everyone is living the same pandemic, said Frank Ghinassi, behavioral health leader at [RWJBarnabas Health](#) and Rutgers University.

The children most negatively affected, he said, are those who were already disadvantaged by food or housing instability, domestic violence, unsafe neighborhoods, fragmented families or absent role models.

"The dilemma teachers face in a virtual environment is that they likely know who struggles the most with poverty and other difficulties, and yet virtually they have to treat everyone more or less equal," Ghinassi said.

That's why some districts are stressing the emotional side of learning for all kids, before asking them to hit the books.

In Falls Church City Public Schools in Virginia, the district of about 2,800 students will start online Aug. 24 and [spend the entire first week](#) establishing class expectations, procedures, behaviors and simply getting all students accustomed to going to class and learning again, said Superintendent Peter Noonan in a memo July 24.

Philadelphia Public Schools is sponsoring a [free mental health hotline](#) to connect kids and families to grief support services to cope with the trauma of the pandemic, according to the Philadelphia Inquirer. The service is a partnership with [Uplift Center for Grieving Children](#), a local agency that staffs the line with master's level clinicians.

In El Paso, Texas, schools are planning a 30- to 45-minute weekly block for students to connect with their teachers around social and emotional skills. And each day will include a short, live session on connection and community building, said Ray Lozano, executive director of student and family empowerment for the El Paso Independent School District.

Lozano said time spent on those skills will be more structured than in spring.

Teaching and learning, especially this year, needs to be "more relational and less transactional," he said.

Why stress emotional health so much?

In recent years, "social and emotional learning" has become a buzzword in schools, but it doesn't get as much attention as academic learning because it's harder to measure progress and results.

But a growing body of research, as well as anecdotal evidence from schools, suggests students perform better academically when they're taught how to control their emotions and how to develop traits like empathy, determination, a collaborative spirit and the ability to navigate conflict.

"We're talking about fostering an inclusive environment and caring relationships that elevate student voice and agency," said Justina Schlund, director of field learning for the [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning](#), a nonprofit in Chicago. "They can contribute to their own learning, but also contribute to their school and their community."

The challenge: how to do that when classes are starting virtually, before teachers have ever met some or all of their students, and before the students know each other well.

[Austin Achieve Public Schools](#), a charter school network in Texas, plans to start each morning with 45 minutes of social and emotional learning. The network will adapt its tradition of "circle time" — where kids sit in a circle for a moderated talk, and where just one student speaks at a time — to an online setting.

Usually, those in a circle pass around a token known as the "talking piece," but when circling up via videoconference, teachers will have to get better at using the mute button on everyone but the speaker, said Danielle Owens, restorative justice coordinator at Austin Achieve.

In California's Oakland Unified School District, which will open Aug. 10 with all students learning remotely, virtual morning meetings will be held for 10 to 30 minutes, depending on the grade level, said Sonny Kim, who coordinates the Office of Social and Emotional Learning.

The plan is to have teachers greet every student individually, set the tone and purpose of the day and teach or practice a social skill through a virtual activity. The district hopes to create a sense of belonging and build inclusion, Kim said.

"The goal is more student talk than teacher talk," he said. "We want to be asking, 'Who else agrees and why?' and 'Who has something to add to what was just said?'"

Allison Grill, a third-grade teacher at Emerson Elementary in Oakland, started adapting social and emotional learning to an online space in spring. She and her fellow third-grade teacher even devised a "virtual recess" for students.

The teachers would mute themselves in the video-conference program and encourage the students to talk live and chat live in the application with each other — about anything they liked.

Also, each morning in a quick online form, they'd have students pick a color that described their feelings, like red for angry, yellow for high energy but positive, green for focused, calm and ready to learn.

"We'd ask them: 'Is there anything you want your teacher to know about you today?'" Grill said. "And we then asked a question to start the day, like, 'What TikTok dance do you want to learn this week?' Or, 'What's your favorite ice cream?'"

In the spring, students had already gotten to know their teachers in person. So for this fall, Emerson's teachers are working more closely with their colleagues in the previous grade to understand the individual personalities of incoming students. That's easier at Emerson, Grill said, because teacher retention is high and there are only two classes of students per grade.

Another idea that's brewing in Oakland: Teachers might make home visits — either in-person outside, or virtually — to all their students' families at the beginning of the school year, to try to foster strong relationships.

Parents are co-teachers. Here's how they can help.

Because so much development is happening at home right now, parents and caregivers can do a lot to encourage good mental health, several behavioral health experts said.

That means enforcing regular times for sleeping, eating, and exercising. And sit-down family meals are still important, said Rich, who also runs a specialty clinic for children with internet use disorders at Boston Children's Hospital.

Parents also must put down their own devices and listen to their kids, he added.

"Ask how they're doing," Rich said. "Observe them. I am as concerned about parental screen time as kid screen time. It erodes our connectedness with each other."

Teachers can model good at-home behaviors, too, said Ghinassi, from Rutgers.

During virtual connections with students, teachers can encourage kids to do jumping jacks before focusing on their work. Teachers and staff can talk about having gone for a walk or run that morning, and they can stress to students how they keep their own consistent bedtimes and wake-up times, he said.

"With older kids, you can convince them at the beginning or end of class to go through a deep breathing exercise or a mindfulness strategy," Ghinassi said.

One problem, however, is that parents are already overwhelmed right now.

In Randolph, Massachusetts, just outside Boston, Yahaira Lopez is the mom of twin boys headed into fifth grade. One has attention deficit disorder and the other has autism, and both rely heavily on social and emotional supports at school.

Through the pandemic, she said, one of her sons has become convinced he has to eat every two hours, while the other has become addicted to online games. If Lopez doesn't sit next to her sons while they're doing schoolwork, they'll open another tab on their computers and goof around instead of doing their work.

"They're bored at home, and they don't want to be here," Lopez said.

But the boys also feel safer at home and don't want to go back to a school building, she said.

Lopez hopes the boys' new teachers figure out ways to help them express their anxiety and uncertainty through art or music or books when school starts virtually.

"I feel like they need something creative that helps them understand their world," Lopez said. "Their music teacher gave them an app that let them download their own beats in the spring. They loved that. Could they sing a song and upload it?"

Taking care of teachers is important, too

One of the most overlooked areas of social and emotional learning, several experts said, is how much schools need to foster it among teachers and staff.

School staff have faced their own trauma since March, including economic uncertainty, the challenges of remote learning, managing their own children while working remotely, caring for sick family members or being sick themselves.

Because much of the teaching that happened in spring was chaotic and disorganized, teachers need to feel a sense of safety and belonging before they can discuss among their peers and superiors what didn't work — and how they can improve, said Grill, from Oakland.

The first virtual back-to-school staff meeting at her school didn't go very well, because teachers just dove into talking about how to reinvent school this fall, Grill said.

"We all forgot to stop and do the kind of community building among ourselves that we do so well with students," she said.

When the staff reconvened virtually two days later, they started with a check-in about everyone's emotions, and they played a little game. That helped build connection and trust, and the talks about how to improve online school this fall went much more smoothly, Grill said.

Adults need this kind of support before they can foster it in students, said Schlund, of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning.

"It might sound basic to say: 'Let's have adults sit in a circle and talk about our feelings,'" Schlund said.

	"But we're seeing that these are really important moments, especially when talking about race and identity and being able to develop the type of community who can have difficult conversations and work with each other to solve problems."
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HEADLINE	07/31 WHO: no 'zero risk' travel restrictions ease
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-who-travel/there-is-no-zero-risk-in-easing-travel-restrictions-who-says-idUSKCN24V3J8
GIST	<p>(Reuters) - There is no "zero risk" strategy for countries easing international travel restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, and essential travel for emergencies should remain the priority, the World Health Organization (WHO) said.</p> <p>In a long-awaited update to its guidance on travel, the United Nations global health agency said cross-border trips for emergencies, humanitarian work, the transfer of essential personnel and repatriation would constitute essential travel.</p> <p>"There is no 'zero risk' when considering the potential importation or exportation of cases in the context of international travel," it said in the updated guidance posted on its website on Thursday.</p> <p>A surge of new infections in many parts of the world has prompted some countries to reintroduce some travel restrictions, including testing and quarantining incoming passengers.</p> <p>The WHO had said in June it would update its travel guidelines before the northern hemisphere summer holidays.</p> <p>The WHO's guidance can be used by governments and industries to help shape policies, but is not enforceable.</p> <p>The updated travel advice is little changed from previous guidance, which also included infection control advice applicable to other settings such as social distancing, wearing masks, washing hands and avoiding touching the face.</p> <p>The WHO urged each country to conduct its own risk-benefit analysis before lifting any or all travel restrictions. Authorities should take into account local epidemiology and transmission patterns, it said, as well as national health and social distancing measures already in place.</p> <p>Countries that choose to quarantine all travellers on arrival should do so after assessing the risks and consider local circumstances, the WHO said.</p> <p>"Countries should continuously plan for and assess their surge capacities for testing, tracking, isolating and managing imported cases and quarantine of contacts," it said.</p> <p>The WHO said this week that international travel bans cannot stay in place indefinitely, and countries will have to do more to reduce the spread of the novel coronavirus within their borders.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/31 Eurozone economy suffers record drop
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/5ee44af8197a724cfb1ad16787275fbc
GIST	PARIS (AP) — The economy of the 19-country eurozone shrank by a devastating 12.1% percent in the April-June period from the quarter before - the largest drop on record - as coronavirus lockdowns shut businesses and hampered consumer spending.

Economists say the worst of the downturn is past as many restrictions have eased, but that the recovery will be drawn out and vulnerable to renewed virus outbreaks.

Spain, which along with Italy was among the first to get hit hard by the spread of the virus, suffered the region's heaviest drop at 18.5%. France, Italy and Portugal also endured steep declines, but no country escaped the impact of the pandemic.

For the currency union as a whole it was the biggest decline since the records started in 1995. The broader 27-country European Union, not all of whose members use the euro, saw output sag 11.9%.

The decline in Europe compares with a 9.5% quarter-on-quarter drop in the United States, which unlike Europe has not yet been able to get its contagion numbers firmly down yet and whose economic recovery is in doubt.

European governments are countering the recession with massive stimulus measures. EU leaders have agreed on a 750 billion-euro recovery fund backed by common borrowing to support the economy from 2021. National governments have stepped in with loans to keep businesses afloat and wage support programs that pay workers' salaries while they are furloughed. The European Central Bank is pumping 1.35 trillion euros in newly printed money into the economy, a step which helps keep borrowing costs low.

Those support measures have helped keep unemployment from spiking. The rate rose to 7.8% in June from 7.7% in May. But many job losses will wind up being permanent despite the stimulus. Major companies such as Lufthansa, Daimler and Airbus have said they will cut thousands of jobs.

Economists say the downturn was concentrated in the months of April and May when lockdowns were most severe. Many restrictive measures have been eased, and business confidence in Germany, the biggest eurozone economy, has ticked up for three straight months.

But the outlook is for a long and uncertain climb back to pre-virus levels that could take until 2022 or longer. Company forecasts for the rest of the year assumed that there is not a renewed outbreak of COVID-19, the illness caused by the coronavirus. Cases have been rising again in several countries as people go on vacations and Britain slapped a 14-day quarantine on travelers returning from Spain.

Rosie Colthorpe, European economist at Oxford Economics, said the current third quarter was likely to see high growth rates, "but not nearly large enough to make up for the damage."

"Beyond this initial bounce, the recovery is set to be gradual and uneven," with pre-virus output regained only by mid-2022, she said, adding that "recent flare-ups of the virus in several European countries risk derailing this recovery."

The Spanish economic drop was by far the sharpest since the country's national statistics agency began collecting data. Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez was meeting later Friday with the leaders of Spain's regions to discuss how to rebuild the economy and where to deploy billions of euros in European Union aid for recovery.

Germany, the largest of the countries that use the euro, went through a 10.1% decline, the biggest since records started in 1970.

In France, the startling plunge of 13.8% in April-June was the third consecutive quarter of contraction in France's worsening recession. The pain has been so damaging to jobs and industries that the government is talking down the possibility of another nationwide lockdown as infections tick upward again. Finance minister Bruno Le Maire called on French people to spend more to help the economy recover.

"All the growth in GDP seen in the 2010-2019 decade has been wiped out in five months," said Marc Ostwald, chief economist at ADM Investor Services International. In Italy's case, economists said it wiped out about 30 years of growth.

HEADLINE	07/31 Protest tactics spread like memes
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/31/style/viral-protest-videos.html
GIST	<p>A video frame captured in Hong Kong in August 2019 shows a group of pro-democracy protesters, smoke pluming toward them, racing to place an orange traffic cone over a tear-gas canister. A video taken nine months later and 7,000 miles away, at a Black Lives Matter protest in Minneapolis, shows another small group using the same maneuver. Two moments, two continents, two cone placers, their postures nearly identical.</p> <p>Images of protest spread on social media reveal many other matching moments from opposite sides of the world, and they often feature everyday objects wielded ingeniously.</p> <p>Leaf blowers are used to diffuse clouds of tear gas; hockey sticks and tennis rackets are brandished to bat canisters back toward authorities; high-power laser pointers are used to thwart surveillance cameras; and plywood, boogie boards, umbrellas and more have served as shields to protect protesters from projectiles and create barricades.</p> <p>An Xiao Mina, a researcher at the Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University, has studied these echoes. In the summer of 2014, when the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong and the Black Lives Matter protests in the United States that followed the police killing of Michael Brown were taking place, she noted that the protesters spoke a common language, even sharing the same hand gesture characterized by the chant “Hands up, don’t shoot.”</p> <p>Occasionally, there was even direct acknowledgment between the disparate groups, “as when Ferguson protesters donned umbrellas against the rain and cheekily thanked protesters in Hong Kong for the idea,” Ms. Mina wrote in her 2018 book, “Memes to Movements.”</p> <p>But often, she noted, the images’ similarity was unwitting. In their spread, their simultaneity and their indirect influence on each other, the protest videos had all the characteristics of memes, those units of culture and behavior that spread rapidly online. The same cultural transfer that gives us uncanny cake-slicing memes and viral challenges also advances the language of protest.</p> <p>“We live in this world of attention dynamics so it makes sense that tactics start to converge,” Ms. Mina said. She called the images’ tendency to build on each other “memetic piggybacking,” and noted that everyday items that are subverted into objects of protest are “inherently charismatic.”</p> <p>Franklin López, a founder and former member of Sub.media, an anarchist video collective that has filmed dozens of protests, said that “videos shared through social media and mainstream media reports become rough ‘how-to guides’ on protest tactics.”</p> <p>“You see peeps in Hong Kong using umbrellas as countersurveillance tools and folks over here will say, ‘hey, brilliant idea!’ and you’ll see umbrellas at the next militant protests,” he said.</p> <p>Of course, it’s not just social media mimicry. Ms. Mina pointed out that “activists from around the world do actively learn from each other and exchange tactical tips.”</p> <p>On the topic of direct communication between groups in Hong Kong and the United States, Mr. López said: “Texts outlining not only tactics and strategies but reports of what worked and what didn’t are shared and translated, but also talked about in in-person events, film screenings and internet talks.”</p> <p>In June, for example, Lausan, a group that formed during the Hong Kong protests that seeks to connect leftist movements in various countries, was a host of a webinar. It provided a forum for Hong Kong and American activists to share strategies.</p>

Katharin Tai, a doctoral candidate in political science at M.I.T. who studies Chinese foreign policy and the intersection of international politics and the internet, separated information sharing between Hong Kong and the United States into two categories.

One was group-to-group sharing of tactics between the sets of protesters, though she noted that because both protest efforts were non-hierarchical, they were not necessarily organized from above.

The second, she said, included the translation of helpful graphics and information — say, which sort of gas masks best protect against tear gas — that are then posted online. “That’s the less organized way, where they’re just kind of pushing it out into the ether,” she said.

The social internet has sped up a long history of direct and indirect dialogue between protest movements around the world.

Mark Bray, an organizer of Occupy Wall Street and a lecturer at Rutgers University, said that sharing or imitating protest strategies and tactics is “as old as protest strategies and tactics are,” but that social media “has exposed people to more different tactics.”

“In that sense, like all kinds of new communications technologies, it has shortened the perceived distance between movements around the world,” said Mr. Bray, who is the author of “Antifa: The Anti-Fascist Handbook,” a history of that movement.

Anastasia Veneti, who teaches at Bournemouth University in England and specializes in media coverage of protest movements, said that photographs and video that have been produced and circulated by the protesters “have influenced professional photographers who have begun to produce similar images.”

“With this global wave of post-2010 activism, we’ve seen that this paradigm or media framing has started to change and to a great extent, this change is to be credited to the fact that protesters themselves are better organized thanks to the use of new media technologies,” she said.

Matching protest images are not only found between Hong Kong and the United States. They crop up in Mexico and Greece, Kurdistan and Catalonia.

But Hong Kong does play a central role in the activist imagination, scholars and activists said, thanks both to the tactical ingenuity of protesters there, as well as Western media’s willingness to cover pro-democracy demonstrations extensively.

Gabriella Coleman, a professor at McGill University who studies digital activism, noted that even nonpolitical publications were moved to cover the Hong Kong protests. “Because Hong Kong is seen as a Western-style democracy that’s being eaten up by its authoritarian parent, there’s no controversy in reporting on it,” she said.

Asked whether Hong Kong loomed particularly large in the eyes of experienced protesters, Mr. López answered emphatically: “Hell yeah!” He called the protests in Hong Kong “epic.”

“More than anything the discipline, organization and persistence of these folks has been awe inspiring,” Mr. López said, adding that the people of Hong Kong “are showing us what is possible.”

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HEADLINE	07/31 ‘Perfect storm’ leads to police budget cuts
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2020/07/31/defund-police-covid-19-force-deepest-cop-budget-cuts-decade/5538397002/

Facing the dual forces of the [coronavirus pandemic](#) and the national movement to "[defund the police](#)," law enforcement agencies across the country are bracing for budget reductions not seen in more than a decade.

Nearly half of 258 agencies surveyed this month are reporting that funding has already been slashed or is expected to be reduced, according to a report slated for release this week by the Police Executive Research Forum, a non-partisan research organization.

Much of the funding is being pulled from equipment, hiring and training accounts, even as a number of cities also are tracking abrupt spikes in violent crime, the report concluded.

Few agencies, regardless of size, are being spared. Deep reductions have been ordered or proposed in Los Angeles, New York, Seattle, Baltimore County, Maryland, Tempe, Arizona, and Eureka, California.

Chuck Wexler, executive director of the D.C.-based think tank that authored the report, said police operations have not confronted such a threat since the financial crisis of 2008, when operations and force numbers were cut dramatically to account for the steep decline in available public funds.

"Unfortunately, the situation this time is only certain to get worse because of the pandemic's resurgence and the convergence of the defund police movement," Wexler said. "It's a combustible mixture for police departments, because reform is often achieved by hiring a next generation of officers and acquiring new technology that can assist their work. The unintended consequence of these times is that those reforms will now be held back."

But Scott Roberts, senior director for criminal justice campaigns for the civil rights advocacy group Color of Change, said law enforcement has been "the most out of touch" in recognizing a need for new policing policy.

"The lack of imagination in public safety has only led to continuing down the same path to investing in more law enforcement," Roberts said. "This call for defunding police is not just about taking money from policing, it's about making the investments we need to make in things like health care, including mental illness."

The first shock waves rippled through law enforcement this month when New York municipal officials slashed \$1 billion from the largest police force in the country with an operating budget of about \$6 billion. The cut effectively canceled a 1,200-person police recruiting class, curtailed overtime spending and shifted school safety deployments and homeless outreach away from the NYPD.

About the same time, Los Angeles cut its police budget by \$150 million, while Seattle has proposed a 50% reduction to a force that's struggled to contain protests that erupted following the May 25 death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police.

"There are a lot of pressures dragging down and threatening levels of public safety," Los Angeles Police Chief Michel Moore said. "It's really a perfect storm."

'A recruiting, retention crisis'

Even smaller cities facing less pressure from the social justice movement have not been able to escape an unfolding financial crisis driven by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Steamboat Springs, a ski-resort town in northwest Colorado largely supported by tourism-driven sales tax dollars, the police department is cutting its budget by 28% or nearly \$1.5 million. It means that vacant positions will go unfilled and civilian employees are taking a 10% pay cut, Police Chief Cory Christensen said.

The police department's training and recruiting budgets already have been zeroed out.

“At a time when we’re talking police reform and how to make police departments better, one of the strategies is having training. But not having funding for that, we will fall behind in making sure we’re up to par with best practices,” Christensen said, adding that the department has yet to meet state-mandated training hours.

Christensen was able to hire a few officers in the last three years, but the police force has barely kept pace with the town’s growing population – up from 3,000 to 13,000 in the last two decades. The police department now has 44 employees, a slight increase over the past 20 years.

At the same time, calls for service are up 23% from last year, the busiest year in Christensen's memory.

“I don’t know yet whether I’m going to have to lay off police officers,” he said. “I don’t have enough police officers as it is to do emergency calls,” he said. “Our cuts are going to mean we’re going to plow the streets less, water the grass less. We’re going to police with less. It’s a challenge.”

In Eureka, a Northern California town of nearly 27,000 where sales taxes are also the primary source of revenue, the pandemic is responsible for doubling an already projected deficit for the next budget year, Police Chief Steve Watson said.

The police department is cutting its budget by 8%, or nearly \$1.2 million. That means losing six positions through a combination of early retirement incentives, resignations and allowing vacant positions to go unfilled, Watson said. The agency currently has about 50 employees, a staffing level that already struggles to keep up with the workload.

“We are already in a recruiting and retention crisis that’s been going on for years. I can foresee it’s going to get far worse,” Watson said.

'It could take years to recover'

Law enforcement has been at the center of financial and social justice crises in the past, but there is a reason why Wexler and his group believe this storm is different.

Comparing the think tank's 2020 survey – conducted just five months into the pandemic – with similar 2008 research –, a year into that recession – the group found that more police agencies planned cuts to training, hiring and technology acquisitions this year than during the last economic crisis.

"If we're just comparing to 2008, the cuts this time could be significantly deeper and it could take years to recover," Wexler said, adding that the social justice movement has yet to take full effect in some communities where local leaders are entirely reassessing public safety operations.

Regardless of the new pressures, Ed Davis, a former police commissioner in Boston who helped oversee the Boston Marathon bombing investigation, cautioned his former colleagues not to sacrifice training to balance a budget.

When forced to decide between training and deploying officers to local neighborhoods, Davis said chiefs often choose the latter.

“Then police don’t have the skills they need to do what needs to be done properly, and then something bad happens and everybody wonders why something bad happens,” Davis said.

Of the campaign to defund police, Davis called the movement “ill-advised.”

“I understand that people are angry. We really have to deal with the kind of system that led to Officer Chauvin being on the police department,” Davis said, referring to former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, now charged with second-degree murder in [George Floyd's death](#). “The problem is if you remove police from the street in large numbers, the very people that have been victimized by racial inequality are going to be the ones suffering the most.”

'A sea change' in Los Angeles

For the first time in five years, and largely propelled by the recent budget cuts, the police force in Los Angeles will fall below 10,000 officers. Chief Moore said the department had struggled for years to keep its numbers up, and breaking the 10,000-officer mark had been a source of internal pride.

The \$150 million moved from the police budget this year, however, will require accepting more than a smaller number. Moore calls it "a new normal."

"We're not just talking about holding on for a few months," Moore said. "There is no immediate exit door from the pandemic. It's likely to go on for some time. With the addition of the social justice movement, there is even more pressure to articulate a path forward that is thoughtful, understanding the challenge before us."

The challenge, Moore said, is "turning the crisis into an opportunity."

Adjusting to the new normal is forcing local leaders to reassess the police department's resource-draining obligation to respond to calls involving people who are mentally ill.

At least one-third of the department's calls for service, Moore said, involve people who are mentally ill or emotionally disturbed. Los Angeles is one of hundreds of police departments struggling to find more meaningful and efficient ways to respond to such calls.

The city also is considering shifting its response to local traffic collisions — about 70,000 last year — to another entity.

"Those calls can tie up officers for hours, and it usually results in reports written for the benefit of insurance companies," Moore said.

Another problem thrown into this year's complicated mix: homicides have been ticking up. There have been 169 murders so far this year, compared to 153 at same time last year in the city. The numbers have prompted Moore to reach out to federal authorities for assistance in gun violence investigations.

"You have to remember, this is a people business; this is not a factory where we make widgets," Moore said. "Where we can shift responsibilities, we will do that. This is a significant sea change for us."

In Seattle, Police Chief Carmen Best said a city council proposal for a 50% cut to the force lacks any plan for how or who would be left to respond to the 800,000 calls for service each year.

"I haven't seen a plan, and I have to deal with legitimate calls for service," Best said. "It's a detriment to public safety; it's reckless and dangerous."

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HEADLINE	07/30 Law enforcement social media PR battle
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/after-floyd-s-killing-law-enforcement-wages-pr-battle-social-n1235249
GIST	<p>In early July, Kevin Conner hung several large Black Lives Matter flags off the back of his Ford F250 pickup truck and began cruising the main drag of Middleburg, a suburb of Jacksonville, Florida.</p> <p>Conner's one-man protest was partly triggered by the arrest of a CNN crew after the May 25 police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. It was also prompted by a Facebook video promising to crack down on "lawlessness." Posted on June 30 by the sheriff's office in Clay County, the mostly white, mostly Republican area where Conner lives, the video features Sheriff Darryl Daniels, who is Black, sporting a cowboy hat and flanked by more than a dozen deputies.</p>

In a monologue set to a pounding drum beat, Daniels dramatically intones that he will deputize every lawful gun owner in Clay County to respond to protesters “the second” they “step out from up under the protection of the Constitution.”

The video traveled well beyond Clay County, [capturing national headlines](#), [inspiring a scathing editorial](#) in a local newspaper, The Florida Times-Union, and generating thousands of comments, many of them supportive. Conner, 43, a former Republican and the founder of an internet marketing firm, said he viewed the video as “a threat of suppression of the First Amendment.”

But Daniels’ effort to win over a corner of the internet is only one example of how law enforcement agencies have increasingly fought a public relations battle through social media amid one of the largest protest movements in recent American history. As the country experienced a large, rapid [uptick in public support for the Black Lives Matter](#) movement, the shift in public opinion was accompanied by the mainstreaming of [phrases like “abolish” and “defund”](#) the police, and even the [cancellation of the influential reality show “Cops,”](#) long [viewed as a pro-police platform that often portrayed Black suspects as violent thugs](#).

In response, police departments and sheriffs have turned to the same social media platforms as Black Lives Matters activists. And the police been using those platforms to directly respond to the movement — and to Floyd’s death — in new and original ways, experts said.

“They all knew George Floyd was going to affect them right here, right now, in their own backyard,” said Lauri Stevens, a former broadcast journalist who in 2005 founded [Laws Communications](#), a company that trains law enforcement agencies to use social media. “There’s no way it couldn’t.”

Using Facebook and Twitter, she added, allows them to at least try to “control the narrative.”

In some cities, like Seattle and Portland, Oregon, where protests have been held for weeks, police departments have used Twitter like an officer with a megaphone — only their messages reach far beyond their communities. “A riot has been declared outside the Justice Center,” the Portland Police Bureau [tweeted last week](#) just after midnight. “Disperse to the north and/or west. Disperse immediately.” [On Sunday, the Seattle Police Department tweeted](#) an up-close photo of an officer's injury that it said was sustained during protests the night before. Readers responded with photos of injuries that they said were caused by police.

Sometimes these efforts appear to spread misinformation, [like when New York Police Commissioner Dermot Shea tweeted](#) a widely shared video of an officer picking up bins filled with what looked like rocks last month. “This is what our cops are up against: Organized looters, strategically placing caches of bricks & rocks at locations throughout NYC,” he said. A [local official later said](#) it was construction debris, and an [NBC News investigation](#) that looked at similar claims in other cities found them to be false. (The NYPD did not respond to requests for comment.)

Other efforts have had dangerous consequences. In Winnipeg, Manitoba, when a woman on Facebook criticized the “excessive harm” of a [widely publicized confrontation](#) in which an officer was captured on camera repeatedly kicking a man on the ground, the police department replied to her post with a summary of the incident saying the man was armed and dangerous. “We were trying to stop a narrative based on a less than clear video,” Winnipeg Police Service spokesman Rob Carver said. But it backfired. On her Facebook page, the woman was harassed and told to take her own life, Carver said.

In an interview, she said she also started getting phone calls from people saying they knew where she lived and worked. “The threats I received were the vague kind that make a person feel they must look over their shoulder at night,” said the woman, who asked not to be named for fear of being targeted again. “I’ve never felt that way in my city.”

A different Winnipeg police spokesman initially defended the department's actions, [telling reporters](#) that “this is a good reminder for all people to think hard and long about what they post on social media.” But in an interview Tuesday, Carver said the department never intended to shame the woman. In the future, he added, media officers would be “much more wary” of posting on a private citizen’s page.

[Solidarity with the movement?](#)

In some cases, officials have taken the unusual step of publicly criticizing other police officers. Two days after Floyd’s killing, a Tennessee police chief [tweeted](#) that there was “no need to see more video. There no need to wait to see how ‘it plays out.’ There is no need to put a knee on someone’s neck for NINE minutes. There IS a need to DO something. If you wear a badge and you don’t have an issue with this ... turn it in.”

The tweet has been liked more than half a million times.

Others have sought to show solidarity with protesters in increasingly stylized ways. In Fayetteville, North Carolina, the police department [posted a bird's-eye view video](#) of a line of officers in tactical gear facing protestors as though in a standoff — and then taking a knee as emotive music swells in the background. Labeled “#FayPD Kneels in Solidarity,” many of the responses were positive, with viewers saying that the video prompted tears. Others remained skeptical. “Don’t pretend that this video makes you saints,” wrote one commenter. “You want to be for justice? SHOW IT by implementing change and reform, and advocating for people’s rights.”

In Nashville, Tennessee, Sgt. Henry Particelli and [the police department released an elegant, slickly produced country music video](#). Titled “Your Name,” Particelli sings about George Floyd’s death. “I cry for you today but I don’t know you/I wish that you were here so we could show you/there’s not a soul on earth that thinks that this is fair.” For most of the song a camera slowly swoops around Particelli, he’s sitting on a stool, strumming a guitar in jeans and a black T-shirt. In the final moments he appears in his dress blues with his head down holding a sign. As the camera pulls back, he raises his head and the sign comes into view: “Believe in change.” Back at the microphone we see him, in full uniform, with a final change of the lyrics: “I promise that we’ll honor your name.”

Christopher J. Schneider, a professor of sociology at Brandon University in Manitoba and author of ["Policing and Social Media: Social Control in an Era of New Media,"](#) said he was astonished at the sophistication of the Nashville video and at how frequently such posts are being produced. “It has to counter the speed of the videos that show them brutalizing people,” he said.

“The police no longer have a monopoly on the crime narrative,” he added. “They can’t turn our internet off. They can’t turn our phones off.” Videos like Particelli’s and other efforts at “brand management” are among the few responses authorities have in a reality upended by cellphone video, Schneider said.

[From MySpace to #MyNYPD](#)

Schneider said that law enforcement agencies began using social media in the mid-2000s, when the public panicked that MySpace might be used by child predators. Most later migrated to Facebook and Twitter, and some of the larger departments have developed social media strategies.

One of their aims was to “humanize the badge,” said Joe Krupa, a former police officer in Muncie, Indiana, and owner of the [Police Social Media Academy](#), where he trains law enforcement agencies to use online platforms. “Social media has become the virtual cop shop, the virtual precinct house,” he said. “You can have a back and forth.”

Some officers and departments have thrived in this new environment. [They went viral with dance videos](#) and [goofy clips showing them gobbling donuts](#). Tommy Norman, a white patrol officer in North Little Rock, Arkansas, which is nearly half Black, earned praise from rappers like “Killer Mike” Render and The Game for his voluminous [posts on Instagram](#), where he has 1 million followers. “This man is out of his patrol car every single day,” [Render told CNN in 2015](#). “He is taking pictures with other peoples’ families that are Black, with white kids in the community, but he’s in the community.”

Other efforts flopped. In 2014, when the [New York Police Department asked people](#) to tweet photos of themselves with officers using the hashtag #myNYPD, they did — only not the kind the department intended. One [showed an officer yanking a woman's hair](#). In another, [police are seen hauling a screaming woman](#) into a police vehicle. “If you can’t walk, don’t worry, the NYPD will carry you,” the tweet joked. “How helpful!”

Back in Clay County, Kevin Conner’s protest of Sheriff Darryl Daniels’ video led to in-person confrontations, themselves re-posted to social media. In one, a man [is seen shouting expletives](#) at him and saying that President Donald Trump will win re-election. [In another](#), a man grins and flashes a swastika bicep tattoo. Conner ended up in a confrontation with police, too. On July 9, one of Daniels’ deputies [arrested him for resisting](#) after a sometimes-heated discussion about where Conner and other protesters could stand with their flags. By then he was out of his car, waving them on a median and on street corners.

Conner documented much of this via cellphone video, and on July 20, when the charge against him was dropped, he wrote that the “experience has peeled another layer off my eyes of what our brothers and sisters of color go through as they are arrested and mistreated every day at highly disproportionate rates by the police. I am now dedicated to this fight to reform policing and eliminate systemic racism from all facets of our country. And it starts here at home.”

He [posted it all to Facebook](#), of course.

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HEADLINE	07/30 Florida’s long, hot summer
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/2020-07-30/florida-prepares-for-a-challenging-hurricane-season-as-covid-19-cases-rise
GIST	<p>MIAMI — STEPHANIE Kaple, who runs a homeless shelter in Key West, has a rule about disasters: You know you’ve reached the end of one when another begins.</p> <p>Kaple was baptized by wind and water when she started her job as executive director of the Florida Keys Outreach Coalition – right before Hurricane Irma struck on Sept. 10, 2017. Devastation from the Category 5 storm was so widespread that not until this spring was she able to get through a day without invoking Irma.</p> <p>Now, as hurricane season approaches its mid-August peak, there’s also a pandemic to endure. Public health experts are calling Florida a COVID-19 epicenter within the U.S., which has the most cases in the world. The state reported more than 250 new deaths from the coronavirus on Thursday, setting another one-day record for new deaths for the third consecutive day.</p> <p>The question is: Can the state handle a rampaging hurricane in the midst of a historic public health and economic crisis?</p> <p>Florida is hurricane-tested and hardened; state officials know the drill. Emergency managers and consultants say their planning reflects the extra challenges the coronavirus presents.</p> <p>Shelters must be stocked with protective gear and reconfigured to accommodate social distancing for the healthy and isolation for the sick, they say. Residents of flood-prone areas who’ve been told for months to hunker down at home must be coaxed outside to reach safer places.</p> <p>The Florida Division of Emergency Management says it’s providing masks, generators and guidance to the state’s 67 counties on how to conform storm shelters for the pandemic: admit no more than 50 people, use temperature-taking and other screening methods to identify the sick, maintain at least 60 square feet for each person.</p>

Elizabeth Zimmerman, a disaster consultant and former Federal Emergency Management Agency official, says she's optimistic about how Florida will handle hurricane season during a pandemic, "because the whole country has been very focused on COVID-19 and what we need to do to contain it."

Disaster managers emphasize a heightened need for volunteerism, philanthropy, self-reliance and sense of community to supplement government support at a time when resources at every level are stretched to the breaking point.

They're working with the more civic-minded hotel chains to offer rooms for hurricane evacuees for free or at reduced rates, Zimmerman says. More than 500 hotels have expressed interest in providing rooms for sheltering, the FDEM said in a statement.

Florida's Red Cross chapter sent out a call for hundreds of hurricane volunteers, saying COVID-19 is depleting their ranks. Volunteers tend to be 65 and older, the group most likely to suffer fatalities from the disease.

The weather is already making news as Tropical Storm Isaias heads toward Hispaniola and, possibly Florida, where virus testing sites will be closed for safety this weekend. This season should be more active than usual, with 16 named storms ahead, including eight hurricanes, half of them Category 3 to 5, forecasters from Colorado State University predict.

To meteorologist Dennis Feltgen, that forecast plus the pandemic adds up to this: Floridians shouldn't wait to buy hurricane supplies. "You need to prepare as if you're going to get hit," says Feltgen, a spokesman for the National Hurricane Center in Miami.

Feltgen says detailed guidelines for preparation and sheltering during the pandemic are available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which acknowledges that preparing for a hurricane in the middle of an outbreak is particularly stressful.

The coronavirus has a powerful hold on Florida. Health officials have confirmed 461,379 cases and 6,586 deaths, the Miami Herald reported Thursday.

Since July 10, when Florida health officials began reporting COVID-19 hospitalizations, they're up 36%, according to CNBC. Miami hospitals that hit full ICU capacity are referring patients to neighboring Broward County; medical staffers and first responders are falling ill and even if they're healthy, they're exhausted.

"The last three weeks have been some of the busiest shifts in my entire life," Dr. Mark Supino, who works in the ER at Jackson Memorial Hospital, Miami-Dade County's public health facility, told The Guardian last week. "We've seen some of the sickest patients we've ever seen."

Tourism-dependent Key West, with a population of about 24,100, reopened for business on June 1. Since then, the number of COVID-19 cases "has gone up dramatically," says Kaple, the homeless shelter manager. "Before the reopening, it was under 200 and now it's over 1,000 and rising."

To address concerns about COVID-19, Kaple has to provide protective equipment at the shelter and strive to avoid crowding in close quarters. When her clients must evacuate from the island ahead of a storm, they can't afford transportation and motels.

Kaple tells them to try to identify friends or relatives who might agree to share their homes briefly, "just to be safer during that time." But the pandemic adds a disincentive, as relatives and friends may hesitate to take in outsiders who, they fear, could carry a deadly disease.

	<p>"There's a million horrible things that can happen during a pandemic and we have to accept that bad things are going to happen," Kaple says. "How do I run a shelter while dealing with COVID-19 and help as many people as possible?"</p> <p>"We have to accept there's no end to this in sight," she says. "That's how all of us are going to have to start living our lives until there's a vaccine."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 Judge: full hearing into SPD use-of-force
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/judge-postpones-arguments-in-crowd-control-weapons-case-orders-hearing-into-use-of-force-against-protesters/
GIST	<p>A federal judge has postponed scheduled arguments over whether Seattle police violated an injunction against using force on peaceful protesters, and has asked lawyers for Black Lives Matter Seattle-King County and the city to plan for a full hearing on the issue.</p> <p>U.S. District Judge Richard Jones initially set Friday morning for arguments over a motion by BLM, which asked Jones to find the Police Department in violation of his earlier injunction prohibiting officers from using force against peaceful protesters.</p> <p>However, in an order Thursday, the judge said he will use that time to set the parameters for a more formal evidentiary hearing on the matter, with testimony and exhibits including video from social media and police body cameras. The date for that hearing has not been set.</p> <p>In pleadings filed Wednesday, the city had asked for an additional 60 days to sort through the evidence and prepare its defense.</p> <p>Jones issued the injunction after finding police had violated the First Amendment rights of thousands of peaceful protesters. The judge cited the indiscriminate use of tear gas, pepper spray, foam-tipped projectiles and other less-than-lethal force against crowds during mass protests in late May and June downtown and on Capitol Hill, where violence forced the SPD to abandon its East Precinct for a time.</p> <p>Earlier this week, BLM Seattle-King County, with the backing of the American Civil Liberties Union, filed a motion accusing police of violating that injunction. They asked the court to hold the department in contempt and require sanctions and additional safeguards against abuses. The organization filed two dozen sworn declarations from journalists, medics, legal observers and others detailing a string of injuries and purported assaults by police.</p> <p>Police have said they were responding to violence and property damage, including arson and threats to officers. Police commanders declared a riot last weekend after vandals in the crowd set fire to buildings and equipment at the construction site for the youth jail.</p> <p>The city says police complied with the injunction and used force only against individuals who were disobeying officers or damaging property. It conceded, however, that innocent bystanders may have been inadvertently injured or impacted during the melee.</p> <p>BLM, in new filings Thursday, said the city has a “deeply flawed” understanding of the injunction that led to officers using blast balls, pepper spray and other less-than-lethal tools to move crowds along, including those who were not involved in vandalism or assaulting officers.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 DOH: 55,803 cases, 1564 deaths
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/coronavirus/article244602247.html

GIST	<p>The Washington State Department of Health on Thursday reported 818 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 and nine new deaths.</p> <p>Pierce County reported 112 new cases Thursday and two new deaths. Pierce County had a total of 115 deaths likely caused by COVID-19 as of Thursday, according to the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department.</p> <p>Statewide totals from illness caused by the coronavirus are at 55,803 cases and 1,564 deaths, up from 54,985 cases and 1,555 deaths on Wednesday.</p> <p>Forty-eight people with confirmed COVID-19 cases were admitted to Washington state hospitals on July 22, the most recent date with complete data. Late March had two days with 88 people admitted, the highest numbers to date during the pandemic.</p> <p>Washington state has conducted 973,654 coronavirus tests. On July 22, the most recent date for which data is complete, 15,389 specimens were collected statewide, with 6% testing positive. The average positive test rate for the seven days prior was 5.5%.</p> <p>The test numbers reflect only polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests, which are given to patients while the virus is presumably still active in the body.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 Sawant proposal cuts SPD budget 50%
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/2061323/kshama-sawant-proposal-defund-spd-2020-budget-50-percent/
GIST	<p>Councilmember Kshama Sawant laid out the specifics of her proposal Thursday to cut the Seattle Police Department's remaining 2020 budget by 50%.</p> <p>Sawant introduced her plan in the form of upcoming amendments to the city budget, making it the first instance of the "defund SPD" movement taking official legislative form.</p> <p>Her proposal would cut \$85 million, totaling 50% from SPD's remaining \$170 million budget in 2020. That would include the original \$16 million in cuts Mayor Jenny Durkan proposed in late June, which would encompass a freeze on the hiring of new officers, and limits on new equipment and training.</p> <p>The remaining \$69 million in cuts would be seen in "across-the-board reductions in patrol and other operations," while eliminating the city's Navigation Team (and subsequently its existing infrastructure for sweeping homeless camps).</p> <p>That money would then be allocated as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ \$34.7 million to fund affordable working class housing in communities facing displacement and gentrification ▪ \$16.3 million for currently unfunded city services to backfill the deficit brought on by the COVID-19 crisis ▪ \$14.7 million to move the city's 911 call center out of SPD's purview and into civilian control ▪ \$15.5 million for black and brown restorative justice, as well as "other community programs" ▪ \$3 million to support black and brown community groups and develop alternative public safety models ▪ \$700,000 to renter organizing and eviction defense ▪ \$80,000 to a Green New Deal Oversight Board <p>Sawant also addressed criticism from Mayor Jenny Durkan and Chief Carmen Best, who have cautioned against what they view as hastily conceived cuts to SPD funding.</p>

	<p>“This new approach to community safety requires deep community engagement and thoughtful analysis. It cannot be accomplished by abolishing police or by a blunt cut of 50% with no alternative plan,” Durkan said in mid July.</p> <p>“Something we hear often is that we have to be thoughtful and take our time — that’s a mind-boggling assertion,” Sawant countered on Thursday. “After eight years of failed police reform while under federal oversight, after the outrageous demonstration of the past two months of indiscriminate police violence against peaceful protesters, after having voted wrongly to approve a racist police contract, and hiring bonuses to attract police officers to the force, after all this, it’s way past the time to act.”</p> <p>Speaking to concerns from the mayor and police chief over a reduction to SPD’s staffing, Sawant pointed out that 19 of the top 200 highest paid Seattle City employees work within the police department, and that the average salary among officers, sergeants, and lieutenants is roughly \$268,000. Chief Best estimates that a 50% reduction to SPD’s budget would force it to cut 681 of its 755 patrol officers.</p> <p>A competing proposal from Durkan and Best would move roughly \$76 million in services out of SPD’s budget in 2021. The pair also vowed to oppose cuts from the city council they believe would “compromise SPD’s ability to provide service and safety to the residents and businesses of Seattle.”</p> <p>Their own proposal involves a series of “common sense” measures designed to transfer “an initial set of SPD civilian functions” out of the department’s purview. That includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moving \$32 million out of SPD’s budget to have the city’s 911 call center operate outside of police control ▪ Moving \$13.7 million in civilian parking enforcement funding to place it under the control of the Seattle Department of Transportation ▪ Moving \$3.3 million to have the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) operate outside of the police department ▪ Moving \$4.5 million to have the Office of Police Accountability function under its own independent budget (while already functioning as an independent office, the OPA’s budget currently falls under SPD) <p>In terms of straight reductions, that would see \$20.5 million cut from SPD’s 2021 budget, including \$13.7 million originally set aside for new hires, \$4.1 million to leave 40 civilian staff positions vacant, and a \$2.7 million cut in overtime spending for police at special events. SPD’s 2020 budget would remain intact under this proposal.</p> <p>Seven of nine council members have voiced support for cutting SPD’s budget in half, a veto-proof majority. Sawant’s council colleagues have yet to comment on the specifics of her budget amendments.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 DOH: slight decline transmission rate
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/2061672/washington-covid-transmission-slight-decline/
GIST	<p>The latest report from the Washington Department of Health points to encouraging trends for the state’s ongoing COVID-19 response.</p> <p>Transmission rates in both Eastern and Western Washington have declined since the DOH’s previous report (compiled as part of joint effort in tandem with Bellevue’s Institute for Disease Modeling and Fred Hutchinson).</p> <p>In Western Washington, the effective reproductive rate — the number of people a single person with the virus will likely infect — was approximately 1.54 on July 17. As of July 23, that number had decreased to 1.16. Eastern Washington saw a decrease from 1.41 to 1.19 in that same period. Generally, an effective reproductive number below 1.0 is the benchmark for success in limiting transmission of the virus.</p>

	<p>“While the trend in new cases continues to rise in many counties, there may be recent decreases or plateaus in King, Spokane, Clark, and Franklin counties; this hopefully reflects improved adherence to masking and distancing guidelines,” the DOH’s latest report, published last Friday, reads.</p> <p>The DOH also cautions that it “cannot entirely rule out impacts from delays in testing” as one of the reasons behind decreases in new cases, and that it “recommend[s] caution when interpreting downwards or flattening trends in recent cases in some counties.”</p> <p>Demographically, new cases appear to be spurred by a recent concentration in young adults, with “increasing burden detected in older adults and children.”</p> <p>On Thursday, Gov. Inslee also noted that the state’s COVID-19 response is “seeing some evidence of success,” while “widespread facial coverings are becoming the norm.”</p> <p>“Better days are ahead,” he said. “We’re in a bit of a lifeboat right now, but we’re all going to get to that shore.”</p> <p>That being so, deaths in Western Washington appear to be increasing for the first time since March, according to the DOH, and the department continues to stress the need to adhere to masking and physical distancing policies in order to continue suppressing the spread of the virus in the days ahead.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 Thurston County sheriff facing recall
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/2060815/thurston-county-sheriff-recall-mask-mandate/
GIST	<p>A statewide mask mandate requires Washington state residents to wear face coverings in most public spaces, with a few exceptions, to limit the spread of COVID-19. In a statement posted to social media at the end of June, the Thurston County Sheriff’s Office said it recommended everyone take safety precautions and wear a mask, but that it would not criminally enforce the mandate.</p> <p>Thurston County Sheriff John Snaza is now facing a recall over that statement, and a judge has ruled that the recall effort can move forward.</p> <p>Snaza’s brother is the sheriff of Lewis County, who had said publicly that he would not enforce the mask mandate saying, “don’t be a sheep.”</p> <p>John Snaza, however, previously said he would avoid blanket statements.</p> <p>“I would just hate to tell somebody that I’m not enforcing something before I hear out what the complaint actually is so that I can talk to the citizen that’s making the complaint and then deal with the issue that the complaint is about,” he said. “And to say that I’m not going to do something, I’m not on that side. And by making a blanket statement that we don’t, we’re not going to enforce that kind of stuff is not fair to the rest of the citizens.”</p> <p>That was what he said the day before the written statement in which he vowed no criminal enforcement.</p> <p>“The unfortunate part is that when I put it out, I didn’t use the word discretion in my memo that I sent out to the citizens,” Snaza explained. “And I was basing my decision off of our Thurston County health director ... at the time, and she had stated that the police should not be enforcing and harassing the public about wearing a mask at her guidance and direction. And that’s what she expressed to us.”</p> <p>“What I didn’t do right was when I sent it out, I should have used the word ‘discretion’ more. And then I shouldn’t have said ‘not enforce,’ and that was the mistake I made,” he added.</p>

	<p>While he encouraged his deputies to wear masks, Snaza did also say it was a judgment call. He recognized that there are times when there may not be time to put on a mask if they're dealing with something that demands immediate attention.</p> <p>"What I asked my deputies to do is make sure that you bring your mask and you put your mask on when it's appropriate and when it's needed," Snaza said. "But I do understand that there's [discussion about] whether the deputy should be wearing a mask the whole time he or she's on shift or not. And that's something that I have given them the, if you will, again, the word discretion to decide when it should be appropriate to put that mask on. And when they can take it off in the car."</p> <p>Snaza wanted to let the citizens and deputies know that he would not make criminals out of people who didn't wear masks, but rather it would be a chance to educate someone on why they should wear one.</p> <p>"I understand that people are on both sides of the fence on wearing or not wearing a mask, and that the governor has made it mandatory, and that I'm asking for them to wear masks and letting them know that it is not my intent to make them criminals out of not wearing a mask, but educating them as to why they should," Snaza said. "And if I could take it back, I wish that I had been able to explain it better. Not only the ... written memo, if you will, to my deputies and to the citizens, but maybe explain it better to anybody who asks today."</p> <p>He liked Ursula's suggestion of rewording his statement as: "I require you all to wear masks, but I understand that there will be times when you just can't."</p> <p>Snaza did add that the majority of his deputies are wearing masks.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 DHS compiled intelligence on journalists
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/dhs-compiled-intelligence-reports-on-journalists-who-published-leaked-documents/2020/07/30/5be5ec9e-d25b-11ea-9038-af089b63ac21_story.html?hpid=hp_hp-banner-main_dhs-740pm%3Ahomepage%2Fstory-ans
GIST	<p>The Department of Homeland Security has compiled "intelligence reports" about the work of American journalists covering protests in Portland, Ore., in what current and former officials called an alarming use of a government system meant to share information about suspected terrorists and violent actors.</p> <p>Over the past week, the department's Office of Intelligence and Analysis has disseminated three Open Source Intelligence Reports to federal law enforcement agencies and others, summarizing tweets written by two journalists — a reporter for the New York Times and the editor in chief of the blog Lawfare — and noting they had published leaked, unclassified documents about DHS operations in Portland. The intelligence reports, obtained by The Washington Post, include written descriptions and images of the tweets and the number of times they had been liked or retweeted by others.</p> <p>After The Post published a story online Thursday evening detailing the department's practices, the acting homeland security secretary, Chad Wolf, ordered the intelligence office to stop collecting information on journalists and announced an investigation into the matter.</p> <p>"Upon learning about the practice, Acting Secretary Wolf directed the DHS Intelligence & Analysis Directorate to immediately discontinue collecting information involving members of the press," a department spokesman said in a statement. "In no way does the Acting Secretary condone this practice and he has immediately ordered an inquiry into the matter. The Acting Secretary is committed to ensuring that all DHS personnel uphold the principles of professionalism, impartiality and respect for civil rights and civil liberties, particularly as it relates to the exercise of First Amendment rights."</p> <p>Some of the leaked DHS documents the journalists posted and wrote about revealed shortcomings in the department's understanding of the nature of the protests in Portland, as well as techniques that intelligence</p>

analysts have used. A memo by the department's top intelligence official, which was tweeted by the editor of Lawfare, says personnel relied on "FINTEL," an acronym for financial intelligence, as well as finished intelligence "Baseball cards" of arrested protesters to try to understand their motivations and plans. Historically, military and intelligence officials have used such cards for biographical dossiers of suspected terrorists, including those targeted in lethal drone strikes.

The DHS intelligence reports, which are unclassified, are traditionally used for sharing the department's analysis with federal law enforcement agencies, state and local officials, and some foreign governments. They are not intended to disseminate information about American citizens who have no connection to terrorists or other violent actors and who are engaged in activity protected by the First Amendment, current and former officials said.

"This has no operational value whatsoever," said John Sandweg, who previously served as the department's acting general counsel.

"This will just damage the intelligence office's reputation," Sandweg said, calling the decision to report on journalists "incredibly dumb."

Officials who are familiar with the reports, and who spoke on the condition of anonymity to candidly discuss them, said they are consistent with the department's aggressive tactics in Portland, and in particular the work of the Intelligence and Analysis Office, which they worried is exceeding the boundaries of its authority in an effort to crack down on "antifa" protesters to please President Trump. He and other senior administration officials have used that "anti-fascist" label to describe people in Portland and other cities who are protesting police violence, as well as others who have vandalized statues and memorials to Confederate officers that they consider racist.

The reports reflect the intelligence office's concerns about leaks of internal information.

"To broadly disseminate an intelligence report, including to numerous state and local law enforcement agencies, about a DHS leak to a reporter strikes me as bizarre," said Steve Bunnell, who served as the department's general counsel for three years in the Obama administration. If department officials were concerned about unauthorized disclosures, they should refer the matter to the inspector general or handle it internally, he said.

Disseminating the information about internal leaks of this nature via the intelligence reports "has nothing to do with DHS's original mission," Bunnell said.

The Intelligence and Analysis Office has for years been the butt of jokes among larger, more established agencies like the CIA and the FBI, who liken it to a team of junior-varsity athletes. The DHS office produces reports that are largely based on unclassified, often public sources of information that current and former officials have said are of limited use.

During operations in Portland, the office has sought to expand its reach. Earlier this month, DHS personnel were authorized to collect information on protesters who threaten to damage or destroy public memorials and statues, regardless of whether they are on federal property, a significant expansion of authorities that have historically been used to protect landmarks from terrorist attacks, former officials said.

The intelligence reports about the journalists say they are "provided for intelligence and lead purposes" and have "been deemed necessary for the intended recipient to understand, assess, or act on the information provided."

One of the journalists, Times reporter Mike Baker, co-wrote an article on July 28 that revealed an internal DHS memo indicating that the camouflaged federal agents sent to put down the unrest in Portland didn't understand the nature of the protests they were facing.

The DHS memo described the conflict as connected to a years-long history of violence against government personnel and facilities in the Pacific Northwest by “anarchist extremists.” But it acknowledged that “we have low confidence in our assessment” when it comes to understanding the current protests in Oregon’s largest city.

“We lack insight into the motives for the most recent attacks,” the memo said.

Baker included an image of that portion of the memo in a Twitter thread that also linked to the Times article. The DHS intelligence report included that tweet and stated that Baker had posted “a leaked Department of Homeland Security (DHS) internal product.”

A spokeswoman for the Times declined to comment.

The other journalist, Benjamin Wittes, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and the editor in chief of Lawfare, had also posted various internal documents to his Twitter feed, including, on July 24, a memo admonishing department personnel not to give information to reporters.

“The ongoing leaks related to our work in Portland remain of great concern as it distracts from our mission and creates opportunities for others to exploit this information for their own benefit,” the unsigned memo states.

The memo was written in response to reporting in Lawfare and The Washington Post days earlier about the new guidance to collect information on people who threatened memorials and statues. The memo defended the intelligence office’s authority and said its work had “informed our analysis on the enduring threat environment [in Portland] and disrupted attempted violent attacks.”

Wittes told The Post that he didn’t object to the department expressing concerns about leaks and that if officials had sent a link to his tweet in a message to employees, he wouldn’t object.

“It’s not the sharing of my tweet that’s disturbing. It’s the construction of it as an intelligence report on a U.S. person that’s disturbing,” Wittes said.

If the department was willing to document public statements this way, what would stop DHS from “making a public record dossier on me?” Wittes asked.

“I’m considering my legal options and will have more to say about this at a later date,” he added.

In a subsequent tweet that was also the subject of an intelligence report, Wittes posted an internal memo from Brian Murphy, the DHS acting undersecretary for intelligence and analysis and a former FBI agent, announcing that officials were changing the terminology used for individuals attacking federal facilities. The decision, Murphy wrote, was based in part on the Open Source Intelligence Reports that officials had reviewed about protesters.

“We can’t say any longer that this violent situation is opportunistic,” Murphy wrote, adding that intelligence “overwhelmingly” led officials to believe that the attackers were driven by “anarchist” and “violent antifa” ideologies.

Murphy’s conclusions cut against the earlier DHS memo, which the Times reported, that said the department didn’t have enough information to know whether the Portland protesters were connected to anti-government groups that had a history of operating in the region.

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HEADLINE	07/30 Black activists push for land reparations
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SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/equity/2020/07/black-pastors-and-activists-want-central-district-land-reparations
GIST	<p>In the midst of ongoing protests against police brutality and the death of George Floyd, Black communities in the Seattle area have begun a push for bigger, more long-term actions toward overcoming the poverty created by decades of racist policies.</p> <p>“We need reparations for our Black and brown communities,” said Pastor Angela Ying of Bethany United Church of Christ one sunny morning in June in front of New Hope Missionary Baptist Church in the historically Black Central District neighborhood. “Isn’t it bad enough that the land was stolen from the Duwamish people?”</p> <p>Ying then drew a clear line, connecting the death of Floyd to the lack of land and housing in the Seattle region, particularly for Black individuals.</p> <p>“Get your knee off our necks and build houses for us,” Ying said. She was referring to the way Floyd died in police custody and her demand that a big business tax fund the building of hundreds of homes in the neighborhood, some of it on church property and other land people living in the Central District were forced to relinquish years ago.</p> <p>One by one, pastors walked up to the podium and reminded those gathered there of the Central District’s golden days, when more than 70% of the population was Black before it dwindled to the approximately 15% it is today.</p> <p>“We believe a systematic genocide took place in Seattle’s Central neighborhood,” said Hayward Evans of the Washington State Civil Rights Coalition as he referred to years of displacement and the continued lack of affordable housing for Black families. “As Martin Luther King said, it’s never too late to do the right thing.”</p> <p>To many, the Black Lives Matter movement has always been about much more than an uprising against police brutality. The health and economic inequities emphasized by the current COVID-19 crisis has firmed that resolve. Black communities nationwide have been disproportionately impacted by the virus while at the same time earning less. In 2018, the median income for a household headed by a Black person in Seattle was \$42,500, compared with \$105,100 for one headed by a white person, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.</p> <p>Overall, the Black population in Seattle is at its lowest point in 50 years, though it has increased in the rest of King County, where the cost of living can be lower. Activists see access to land as one way to build the wealth denied to them by systemic racism and to begin to even the playing field.</p> <p>“I call it reparations, because if it's not reparations, it becomes sort of charitable, you know, and it's not a charitable offer. It's a payment for a debt,” said Donald King, a professor of architecture at the University of Washington who has lived in the Central District for approximately 40 years and is part of The Nehemiah Initiative, a church-led, community-based partnership designed to preserve and revitalize the Central District.</p> <p>“So people say, well, why are you doing this? This is racist,” King said, referring to activists’ demand for land. “You're not doing it for white people. But white people didn't have to suffer under the unconstitutional actions that were taken with redlining and other things.” The practice of redlining after the Great Depression encouraged banks to loan money to would-be home buyers in mostly white neighborhoods.</p> <p>“I think it is important that the Black Lives Matter movement is tying those historic wrongs to what's happening right now, which is a deeply economically and racially unequal society under capitalism,” Seattle City Councilmember Kshama Sawant, a longtime supporter of a business tax, said in a recent interview.</p>

Pastors and advocates hold up New Hope Missionary Baptist Church and the land taken from it as a startling example of the barriers Black communities have faced throughout decades of systemic racism.

Starting in the 1960s, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, or HUD, created what's known as the Model Cities Program. The aim of the program was to clear out "blighted" areas in inner cities by creating opportunities for urban development. Under that program, which targeted the Central District locally, New Hope Missionary Baptist Church was forced to sell land now part of Spruce Street Mini Park to Seattle for \$34,000. That land, which New Hope owned until 1970, is now worth \$2 million, according to the Low Income Housing Institute.

"The land was unjustly taken," said Pastor Robert Jeffrey in a recent interview. "We have evidence that the pastor, the church, did not want to sell the land, but he was threatened that if he didn't sell, they would take it for less money than they were offering. So he relented."

Jeffrey said he and others are looking at other parcels of land in the Central District taken from the Black community. But for now, he wants part of the \$18 million slotted for housing for residents with community connections, and generated by Seattle's new annual tax on big business, to go to his church to build 90 units of affordable housing. The new business tax is expected to raise a total of more than \$200 million annually.

The community goal overall is for at least 1,000 new affordable apartments to be built over three years for historic residents and those displaced from the Central Area. [In a letter to Mayor Jenny Durkan](#) and the Seattle City Council, Jeffrey and two other pastors also said they want to train students of color to help construct some of the new neighborhood developments, including tiny houses.

Sawant said she has helped champion the pastors' goals in an attempt to prevent deepening poverty, citing the likelihood of a pandemic-related recession hurting Seattle.

"The only way that we can prevent this, the burden of this recession from landing on the shoulders of working class people in general, but most acutely on working class communities of color, is to do the exact opposite, which is invest in the community," she said, adding that would include both new housing and construction jobs for the community.

Jeffrey said he also supports the land-based demands from [King County Equity Now](#), a community-led group spearheading the call for defunding the police in Seattle. King County Equity Now wants to stop the redevelopment of Yesler Terrace, a public housing complex in the Central District that is a mix of deeply subsidized and market-rate homes. The project is nearly complete.

"In order to consider the legitimacy of a demand, you have to look at what was promised," Jeffrey argued, referring to the Seattle Housing Authority, which has helped oversee the project. "They underdelivered on the promise of bringing African Americans back into the community, and they underdelivered on the promise of including African Americans in the development process."

Kerry Coughlin, director of communications with the Seattle Housing Authority, said former Mayor Norm Rice, a longstanding African American community leader, and Black-led groups such as Africatown were intimately involved in the redevelopment of the property. Coughlin added that the redevelopment has created a greater number of affordable housing units, a large percentage of which are serving Black individuals and people of color.

Coughlin said she also wants to ensure some of King County Equity Now's proposals don't have the unintended consequences of leading to a loss of affordable housing. Another demand from King County Equity Now — to build affordable housing on the Seattle Housing Authority's operations site — would mean her organization would have nowhere from which to maintain 60% of its affordable housing units.

Not all of King County Equity Now's demands involve affordable housing. The group is also asking that a Central Area nursing home — Paramount — which the Washington state Department of Social

and Health Services acquired due to bankruptcy, be reverted back to Black-community ownership. To free up hospital beds during the pandemic, the state [bought the nursing home this year for \\$13.5 million](#).

The group is also pushing for the building of a Youth Achievement Center at a vacant Sound Transit lot in Columbia City. With King County Executive Dow Constantine announcing the planned shutdown of the new youth jail, King County Councilmember Girmay Zahilay, who is helping shepherd the achievement center, said the plan for the center couldn't come at a more opportune time.

The center is part of a broader national and local movement to reimagine criminal legal systems, Zahilay said in a recent interview.

"If you're closing down our traditional systems of youth incarceration, we need alternatives that are based on a housing-first approach that are therapeutic, that are based on community organizations that already have relationships and a track record with the youth that we're talking about," he said. Programs such as Community Passageways and Creative Justice, an arts-based alternative to incarceration, will likely be part of the new center.

Zahilay said he also supports the Black Lives Matter movement's overall push for land.

"Ownership is one of the best ways of preventing displacement. So if our communities are able to own property, they can dictate their own destiny," Zahilay said.

Another recent Central District win: the William Grose Center for Cultural Innovation, a meeting place designed to develop small businesses and Black entrepreneurs.

That center is to be built at Fire Station 6, which the city had promised in 2016 to redevelop as part of the [Equitable Development Implementation Plan](#) — a vision for growth that called for the distribution of publicly owned properties to communities facing displacement. The city finally made good on that promise in the midst of the anti-racism protests.

"For me, it's relatively simple," said Isaac Joy of King County Equity Now. "The entire wealth of this country really was built on the Black backs of the enslaved."

Moving the Black community past institutional racism and toward equity is the goal, with a timeline that doesn't last into the next century, Joy said.

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HEADLINE	07/30 Virus lawsuits begin to hit employers
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/families-file-first-wave-of-covid-19-lawsuits-against-companies-over-worker-deaths-11596137454?mod=hp_lead_pos6
GIST	<p>Employers across the country are being sued by the families of workers who contend their loved ones contracted lethal cases of Covid-19 on the job, a new legal front that shows the risks of reopening workplaces.</p> <p>Walmart Inc., Safeway Inc., Tyson Foods Inc. and some health-care facilities have been sued for gross negligence or wrongful death since the coronavirus pandemic began unfolding in March. Employees' loved ones contend the companies failed to protect workers from the deadly virus and should compensate their family members as a result.</p> <p>Workers who survived the virus also are suing to have medical bills, future earnings and other damages paid out.</p>

In responding to the lawsuits, employers have said they took steps to combat the virus, including screening workers for signs of illness, requiring they wear masks, sanitizing workspaces and limiting the number of customers inside stores. Some point out that it is impossible to know where or how their workers contracted Covid-19, particularly as it spreads more widely across the country.

The new coronavirus has created a global health and economic crisis, responsible for the death of more than 150,000 people in the U.S. while straining resources and institutions.

The cases are part of an unfolding liability threat facing U.S. companies of all industries as many resume operations after having employees work remotely or being shut down altogether for months.

The [coronavirus relief bill that Senate Republicans](#) unveiled this week would make it harder for workers to sue their employer if they get sick on the job. The proposed legislation protects companies, schools and churches from being held liable for coronavirus infections beginning in December 2019, unless they acted with willful misconduct or engaged in grossly negligent behavior.

The bill would cap punitive damages, set a clear-and-convincing-evidence burden of proof and raise requirements for personal-injury lawsuits. It would also push such lawsuits to federal courts, which potentially are more favorable to defendants.

The measures face resistance in the Democratic-controlled House, where Speaker Nancy Pelosi opposes the GOP liability plans. She wants lawmakers to instead bolster protections for workers by strengthening Occupational Safety and Health Administration rules.

Legal experts say the GOP proposals would significantly curb, but not eliminate, cases filed on behalf of sickened workers.

“The amount of litigation on the horizon is enormous,” said Harold H. Kim, president of the U.S. Chamber Institute for Legal Reform, an arm of the business trade group.

Labor unions and consumer advocates say that few lawsuits have been filed, and that the Senate bill would deny redress to [injured workers](#) and their families. About 69 employment and labor cases contending that [workers were exposed or potentially exposed to the virus](#) had been filed as of late July, according to a coronavirus litigation tracker maintained by the law firm Hunton Andrews Kurth.

Employers rarely are found liable for employee deaths tied to the workplace. That’s because the legal bar for proving fault is high, and because states often restrict such complaints to their workers’ compensation systems, which typically limit payouts to a portion of a worker’s salary, coverage of their medical bills and disability compensation.

Legal experts say the coronavirus pandemic could change how such cases play out. Early lawsuits on behalf of sickened workers center on whether employers adhered to state and federal guidelines for reducing the spread of the virus, which evolved rapidly in March and April, especially on mask use, and at times conflicted with each other.

Employers who didn’t send sick workers home, enforce social distancing or adhere to mask-wearing guidance could be found liable, legal experts say. Cases that show the employer acted with gross negligence—which aren’t precluded by the Senate proposal and sometimes can proceed outside the workers’ compensation system—could result in out-of-court settlements or end up before sympathetic juries.

Pedro Zuniga worked for 22 years handling produce in a Safeway distribution center in Tracy, Calif. In mid-March, he and other workers complained to supervisors that the work environment wasn’t safe because colleagues were coming in sick, according to Paul Matiasic, an attorney representing the claim by Mr. Zuniga’s family. Mr. Matiasic said management threatened to retaliate against workers if they didn’t show up as the distribution center expanded its hours to meet increased food-shopping demands.

On March 20, the grocer posted a “Team Talk” memo in the distribution center titled “Coronavirus Risks: Fact vs. Fiction.” The sign, which bears the logo of Safeway parent Albertsons Companies, recommended against wearing a mask in the workplace.

“If you are healthy, a mask will not protect you from the respiratory drops an infected person coughs out,” the sign read. “Open areas of the mask can let those drops in.”

On April 4, Mr. Zuniga—trembling, coughing and feverish—went to an area hospital after getting a Covid-19 test, which came back positive. The next day he was transferred to intensive care, where he was put on a ventilator and placed in a medically induced coma. He died eight days later at age 52.

Norma Zuniga, his widow and the mother of their five children, in May sued Safeway and Albertsons for gross negligence and wrongful death in Alameda County Superior Court seeking general and punitive damages. The lawsuit contends that the grocer failed to follow March 9 guidance from OSHA aimed at preparing workplaces for Covid-19, which called for isolating sick workers. It said the grocer misled workers when it said that wearing protective equipment wouldn’t help prevent the spread of the disease.

“It defies common sense,” Mr. Matiasic said of the mask posting, a copy of which is included in Ms. Zuniga’s lawsuit.

An Albertsons spokeswoman said the company doesn’t comment on pending litigation. In July, Safeway and Albertsons filed a motion to dismiss the complaint on the grounds that it didn’t meet the criteria for proceeding outside the workers’ compensation system. It also had the case moved to the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California.

The grocer denied that it failed to take appropriate workplace safety precautions. It said that as of March 20, neither the CDC’s nor California’s official guidance recommended wearing masks, and that state occupational safety and health interim guidance at the time said masks didn’t protect people from airborne infectious disease. It also said that state health and safety officials inspected the distribution center on April 15 regarding Covid-19 procedures and found no violations.

The Ebola outbreak of 2014 offers some clues for how sickened workers’ lawsuits could play out.

Two nurses contracted the deadly virus after treating a Liberian Ebola patient at a Dallas hospital that year. One of them, Nina Pham, sued the company that owned the hospital for not properly training or protecting staff to handle Ebola. The hospital’s owner, Texas Health Resources, denied those claims. The two sides reached an undisclosed settlement out of court two years later.

Brent Walker, an attorney who represented Ms. Pham, said that hospitals that didn’t provide properly fitted N95 masks to clinicians treating Covid-19 patients face particular liability risk because federal regulations already required they do so before the pandemic hit. Other cases are expected to hinge on whether health-care employers followed international and U.S. safety guidelines, he said.

In general, cases may come down to a simple question: “What was negligent as opposed to just an unfortunate outcome?” Mr. Walker said.

Health-care employer groups say that facilities faced an unprecedented workplace safety threat when the pandemic unfolded and shouldn’t be held responsible if they took reasonable precautions to protect employees.

“Many of our institutions were overwhelmed with people with the symptoms and had to react accordingly and were not getting the best guidance from the government,” said Tom Nickels, executive vice president at the American Hospital Association. “To come back and second guess and pick apart actions that people took under a very stressful situation, we think, is incredibly unfair.”

Wando Evans worked the overnight shift stocking shelves and performing maintenance at a Walmart in the Chicago suburb of Evergreen Park. In late March, he told store management he had symptoms consistent with Covid-19, said Tony S. Kalogerakos, an attorney representing Mr. Evans's family. "They just put him back to work," Mr. Kalogerakos said, citing information from Mr. Evans's colleagues.

On March 23, after his symptoms worsened, he again notified store management and was sent home. Two days later he was found dead in his home at age 51.

Mr. Evans's family in April filed a wrongful-death lawsuit in Cook County Circuit Court against Walmart seeking unspecified damages. It contends the retailer didn't initially follow CDC or OSHA recommendations, which put workers and the public at risk.

Walmart filed a motion to dismiss the case in June on the grounds that the claims cannot be brought in a civil lawsuit because they should be handled exclusively by the Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission.

Peggy Cross, a 72-year-old part-time employee at a Walmart in Dallas, in June sued the retailer in Dallas County District Court for more than \$1 million. Her suit contends that she contracted Covid-19 at work because the retailer failed to provide proper protective equipment and take other safety measures. Ms. Cross survived the virus after being hospitalized for a week in late April, according to her complaint. Ms. Cross and her lawyers didn't respond to requests for comment.

Walmart spokesman Randy Hargrove declined to answer specific questions on Mr. Evans's lawsuit, or comment on Ms. Cross's. He said that, while it may be impossible to determine where or how someone contracts the virus, the retailer is taking steps to protect workers and customers.

In April, Walmart began taking store workers' temperatures and requiring that they wear masks or other face coverings. Walmart also has installed sneeze guards at registers, placed social-distancing decals on floors and limited the number of customers in stores. It announced that customers must wear masks in stores in mid-July.

"We continue to mourn the loss of Wando Evans and our thoughts remain with his family. We're also thankful Ms. Cross has recovered from her illness," Mr. Hargrove said. "We take these situations seriously and are continuing to defend the company in both cases."

The families of three employees who worked at Tyson's pork processing plant in Waterloo, Iowa, and died after contracting Covid-19 sued the meat company and nearly 20 of its executives, managers and supervisors in June.

Their complaint, filed in Iowa District Court for Blackhawk County, contends that management was aware that the virus was spreading through the plant by early April, and was urged by local law enforcement and health officials to shut it down. Yet Tyson kept the plant open for days and allowed employees to work crowded elbow-to-elbow while most weren't wearing face coverings, according to the lawsuit.

More than 1,000 Tyson employees were infected with Covid-19 at the Waterloo facility and five have died, according to the lawsuit.

Among them were Sedika Buljic, a 58-year-old Bosnian refugee who worked at Tyson for 18 years before she died April 18 from complications of Covid-19. Reberiano Garcia, a 60-year-old father of 10 whose wife died of cancer last fall, succumbed to the virus on April 23. Jose Luis Ayala, Jr., a 44-year-old maintenance worker known for tinkering with computers, died May 25 from complications of the virus.

The complaint filed by their families says that the company acted with gross negligence because it encouraged sick employees to come to work and failed to implement or convey a range of safety measures to workers, many of whom don't speak English. The families are seeking unspecified economic, noneconomic and punitive damages.

Tyson said on April 22 it was closing the plant because of Covid-19 cases, worker absenteeism and community concerns. It reopened May 7 after testing all returning workers for the virus, opening an on-site health clinic at the plant and taking other safety measures.

In a court filing earlier this week, Tyson denied the plaintiffs' allegations and moved the case to a federal court.

Tyson spokesman Gary Mickelson declined to comment on the lawsuit. He said the meat company started educating workers about the virus in multiple languages in January and told employees to stay home if they didn't feel well. Mr. Mickelson said that the county health department for weeks declined to share information about Tyson workers with Covid-19, and that once it provided the company with a list of names and case information, the company decided to idle production at the plant.

"We're saddened by the loss of any Tyson team member and sympathize with their families. Our top priority is the health and safety of our workers," Mr. Mickelson said. He said Tyson is aware of a small number of active Covid-19 cases involving workers at its Waterloo plant.

Maurice Dotson, a nursing assistant who helped clothe and change the diapers of residents at the West Oaks Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Austin, Texas, went to a local hospital in early April with symptoms of the new coronavirus. He told his mother that "I got the virus at my job but I'm going to be all right," said Quentin Brogdon, an attorney for his mother.

Mr. Dotson tested positive for the virus and, after being put on a ventilator, died April 17. He was 51 years old. In May his mother filed a lawsuit in Travis County District Court against the nursing home seeking damages of \$1 million or more. Her petition contends that the nursing home acted with negligence because it failed to appreciate the danger of Covid-19 and didn't properly train workers to mitigate its spread.

Regency Integrated Health Services, which manages the nursing home, denied the allegations in a June court filing.

Brooke C. Ladner, a senior vice president at the company, declined to comment on the lawsuit. She said staff members at the facility are following enhanced infection control and prevention processes that were implemented when the pandemic began in early March, and that Mr. Dotson "was a dedicated health-care worker who touched countless lives."

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HEADLINE	07/30 Claim: cops bent badges to mark killings
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jul/30/vallejo-police-shootings-bend-badges
GIST	<p>The police chief of Vallejo, California, is opening an inquiry into allegations that officers bent their badges to mark on-duty killings.</p> <p>Located in the San Francisco Bay Area, Vallejo has long faced scrutiny for its high number of fatal police shootings. Vallejo police officers have killed 19 people since 2010, making it one of the most violent small police forces in the country. Just last month, a Vallejo policeman fired five shots through the windshield of his unmarked car, fatally striking an unarmed young man kneeling in a parking lot.</p> <p>Activists and lawyers have argued out-of-control police officers in the city have been allowed to act with impunity – no Vallejo police officer has been charged for an on-duty shooting.</p> <p>This week, the news site Open Vallejo reported that John Whitney, a former Vallejo police captain, accused the department of firing him in August for flagging misconduct that included concerns that some officers bent their badges in a ritual to mark fatal shootings.</p>

Vallejo's police chief, Shawny Williams, who was appointed in November, said he had never noticed a bent badge on his force, and has not spoken about the allegations to any of the accused officers.

Family members of people who have been killed by Vallejo police expressed anger about the allegations and said they were not surprised by the claims.

"It kind of backs up what everybody has been saying or hearing," said Marc McCoy, the older brother of [Willie McCoy](#), the 21-year-old man who was shot to death by [Vallejo officers in 2019](#) after he fell asleep in his car in a Taco Bell drive-through.

Alison Berry Wilkinson, an attorney representing Whitney, told the newspaper that her client flagged the misconduct to the mayor, Bob Sampayan, and other city officials before he was fired after 19 years on the job. Whitney said he became aware of the practice after the killing of McCoy.

Sampayan, who joined the city's police force in 1985 and retired as a sergeant after 27 years with the department, said Wednesday that he was "appalled" by the allegations.

He said he could recall one incident during his career when an officer had a bent corner on his badge, but Sampayan didn't think anything of it until Whitney came to him with allegations following his dismissal from the department.

"My first thought would be to say I'm sorry [to the community], and that we need to change that culture. I am appalled by that behavior," said Sampayan, who was elected in 2016.

He and the city council have called for a special prosecutor to handle the investigation into the death of [Sean Monterrosa](#), the 22-year-old San Francisco man was killed on 2 June.

Police already launched an investigation after it emerged the police car's windshield – a key piece of evidence in the investigation into Monterrosa's killing – had been destroyed.

A police employee, who was not identified, was placed on administrative leave while the city retains an outside investigator to conduct the administrative investigation into destruction of evidence, officials said.

The officer who shot Monterrosa has been involved in [four](#) shootings in [five years](#). He is one of 14 Vallejo [policemen](#) whom residents and activists call the "fatal 14" – officers who have [repeatedly shot and killed citizens and never faced consequences](#).

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HEADLINE	07/30 Study: UK worst surge deaths Europe
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/30/world/europe/UK-deaths-coronavirus-europe.html?action=click&module=Well&pgtype=Homepage&section=World%20News
GIST	<p>LONDON — England has had the greatest rate of excess deaths of any country in Europe during the coronavirus pandemic, with a surge that lasted longer and spread to more places than those in hard-hit nations like Italy and Spain, according to a government report released on Thursday.</p> <p>The findings, in a report by Britain's Office of National Statistics, painted a grim picture of how Britain — and England in particular — weathered the first wave of the pandemic. They came as Prime Minister Boris Johnson spotlighted the struggles of other countries in controlling new infections by moving to put more of them under a travel quarantine.</p> <p>Critics said Mr. Johnson was trying to deflect attention from his own dilatory initial response to the pandemic, which they said had left the country as vulnerable to a resurgence as its neighbors.</p>

When Britain's death toll from the virus first surpassed those of other European countries in May, Mr. Johnson argued that country-to-country comparisons were invidious because governments collect and analyze data differently.

But the statistics office said it avoided those pitfalls by examining mortality rates across Europe from all causes — not just those attributed to Covid-19, the disease caused by the virus — from January to June, and then comparing them to average figures from 2015 to 2019.

That takes into account Covid-19 deaths that were not labeled as such, and deaths indirectly related to the pandemic, like those from a lack of access to hospitals during lockdowns. Demographers believe tracking excess mortality is the most accurate gauge of deaths during the pandemic.

There are some major holes in the data, not least a lack of statistics from Germany, Western Europe's most populous country and one that has performed better than most in keeping down infections and fatalities.

The report also does not provide raw numbers of excess deaths for each country, but rather a relative measure of the rate of deaths above the historical average, adjusted for factors like age differences.

The statistics office has separately estimated that the United Kingdom suffered 55,763 excess deaths from March 14, when the virus began circulating in the country, through July 17. A [New York Times analysis](#) puts excess deaths in Britain at 62,600 over the same period, by far the most in Europe and a 31 percent increase in mortality for that time of year.

The British report confirms the harrowing images of overwhelmed hospitals in Italy and Spain in March and April. At their peak, deaths in parts of Spain and Italy surged much more than anywhere in Britain, spiking to 9½ times the usual rate in mid-March in Bergamo, in Northern Italy, an early epicenter.

In England, where the local increases were not as steep, the biggest jump was to 4½ times normal in mid-April in Brent, a borough of London. Birmingham had the highest peak for a major British city, at 3½ times the average of recent years.

But the death rate for Britain as a whole was elevated longer than in Spain or Italy, and the increase spread to every corner of the country.

"Excess mortality was geographically widespread throughout the U.K. during the pandemic, whereas it was more geographically localized in most countries of Western Europe," said Edward Morgan, an expert in health analysis and life events at the Office for National Statistics.

For most European countries, the death rate spiraled in late March and early April. During the last week of March, the worst across Europe with 33,000 excess deaths, Spain alone registered over 12,500 more fatalities than would be expected when compared with data from 2016 to 2019, and Italy over 6,500 more, according a second study, by the French national statistics agency, INSEE.

All told, Italy has reported 35,129 Covid-19 deaths and Spain has reported 28,441, but the Times analysis puts excess deaths at more than 44,000 in each of those countries.

The British report focused primarily on England rather than the entire United Kingdom because, it said, the governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland administer their own health policies, often with different results. England, the largest part of Britain, has recorded much sharper increases in death rates during the pandemic than the others.

Public health experts have attributed Britain's high toll in part to the timing of Mr. Johnson's lockdown, which came a week after those in Italy and Spain. The government abandoned a program of mass testing and contact tracing in early March, depriving it of data on how fast the virus had circulated in the population.

Mr. Johnson's messaging may have played an inadvertent role. Worried about the National Health Service being overrun, as hospitals in Italy had been, the prime minister urged people to "Stay at home" and "Protect the N.H.S."

The British public took that to heart and hospitals coped well with the flood of patients, one of the pandemic's few bright spots. But experts said that some sick people who should have gone to the hospital stayed home — and at least some of them died of cancer, heart disease or other illnesses.

"'Protect the N.H.S.' became interpreted as 'Stay away from the N.H.S.,'" said Devi Sridhar, chair of the global public health program at the University of Edinburgh.

That could help explain one of the intriguing disparities in the report, she said. It showed that in London, which was hard hit by the virus, there was little difference in the excess death rate for people over the age of 65 and those under 65.

In Madrid and Barcelona, by contrast, there was a huge disparity between those over 65 and the rest of the population, which is consistent with a disease that is more lethal to the elderly. Manchester and Birmingham also showed an age disparity, though somewhat less pronounced.

Professor Sridhar argued that England should adopt a policy of driving new infections down to zero, similar to that of the government in Scotland. With such a policy in place, she said, it would make sense for the government to screen incoming travelers and impose strict quarantines where necessary.

"Otherwise," she said, "given the high level of cases in the community, it might be seen as pre-empting blame for a second wave to Europe."

Last weekend, British officials added Spain to a list of countries from which travelers have to isolate themselves for 14 days. Now they are monitoring France, Belgium and Croatia, where there have been fresh outbreaks. Mr. Johnson said he was determined to stop a second wave of infections imported by British vacationers.

The rapidly changing policy has played havoc with the holiday plans of thousands and drawn criticism from the Spanish government and flagging tourism businesses.

"We think it's a big diversion from the government's failure to handle this in a more sensible way," said Steven Freudmann, the chairman of the Institute of Travel and Tourism, an industry lobbying group. "The risk actually is greater staying at home than it is going to many of these countries."

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HEADLINE	07/30 Coronavirus task force shifts messaging
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/jul/30/deborah-birx-anthony-fauci-recommend-face-shields/
GIST	<p>Top members of the White House coronavirus task force now say that face shields and goggles can be effective ways to combat the spread of the coronavirus — the latest shift in messaging from the federal government on the how to contain a pandemic that has now claimed more than 150,000 American lives.</p> <p>Dr. Deborah Birx, the White House coronavirus response coordinator, said masks that cover the nose and mouth are meant to protect others from infection.</p> <p>"The thing about the face shields — we think that that could protect the individuals and that it would decrease the ability for them to touch their eyes and spread [the] virus as well as those droplets coming towards them," Dr. Birx said Thursday on "Fox & Friends."</p>

Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said this week that if people have goggles or eye shields, they should consider using them.

“You have mucosa in the nose, mucosa in the mouth, but you also have mucosa in the eye,” Dr. Fauci told ABC News. “Theoretically, you should protect all the mucosal surfaces.”

The new medical advice came as news was breaking that former Republican presidential candidate Herman Cain had become the latest high-profile victim of COVID-19. A supporter of President Trump, the 74-year-old onetime pizza chain executive contracted the virus shortly after attending Mr. Trump’s Tulsa political rally last month.

The coronavirus is believed to be spread primarily through droplets that people expel when sneezing, coughing or talking, though there is some evidence of airborne spread through particles that linger in the air for a longer time.

The coronavirus was discovered in Wuhan, China, in December. It swiftly blanketed the globe, killing over 668,000 people and now re-emerging in many countries that had once been thought to have the virus under control.

Mr. Trump on Thursday said he, like the public, just heard about the goggles advice.

“I only heard of goggles for the first time about one hour ago. Now I’m hearing about goggles, so I don’t know,” he said during a stop at the American Red Cross national headquarters in D.C.

At the meeting, Dr. Birx said Tennessee is including a mask, face shield, gloves and hand sanitizers in special packs for teachers who go back into the classroom.

Dr. Birx, Dr. Fauci and others in the federal government are pleading with ordinary Americans to at least wear a protective mask to help combat the spread of COVID-19 amid a resurgence of cases in the South and West and — most recently — parts of the Midwest.

Message from Trump country

But in the early stages of the pandemic, the Trump administration and top health officials were actively telling people not to wear masks, saying the supplies should be saved for frontline medical workers and there wasn’t necessarily evidence that they helped people avoid contracting the disease.

U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams, who urged the public in late February to “stop buying masks,” said Mr. Trump attracted positive attention in Miami for donning one recently.

“I was in Trump country, and they told me to deliver you a message, Mr. President. They told me to tell you you look badass in a face mask,” Dr. Adams told the president on Thursday.

Adm. Brett P. Giroir, the administration’s “testing czar,” said on Thursday that testing is important but it won’t control the national outbreak when there are 70,000 new documented cases per day.

“What will control the outbreak is the personal responsibility that we have been talking about for months,” Adm. Giroir told reporters on a conference call. “Avoid bars, avoid crowded indoor spaces, wear a mask. If you feel sick, stay at home. Protect the vulnerable. Wash your hands. That’s how we control the outbreak. Period. Full stop.”

Mr. Trump also pleaded with COVID-19 survivors Thursday to donate their blood plasma.

The “convalescent” plasma contains antibodies that can help patients fight off the virus. It is part of a trinity of promising treatments that also includes an antiviral drug, remdesivir, and a steroid, dexamethasone.

“If you’ve had the virus, if you donate it would be a terrific thing,” he said at the Red Cross. “You’ve gotten through it, and I guess that means you have something very special there.”

Mr. Trump wore a mask as he visited a donor, Marty Sarsfield. Mr. Sarsfield was hooked up in a basement room and a medical bag filled with his yellow plasma next to him.

“Strong. You’re very famous right now,” Mr. Trump told him.

Elsewhere, Adm. Giroir said there have been signs of progress in some places across the hard-hit Sun Belt but cautioned that no one is declaring mission accomplished.

“No one’s declaring victory. No one’s overly enthusiastic,” he said.

Global reverses

Mr. Trump on Thursday noted that place outside of the U.S. that were praised for their efforts to stamp out the coronavirus are seeing a resurgence, underscoring its wily nature and the need to protect the vulnerable instead of shutting the economy down again.

“Places where they thought they’d really done great,” Mr. Trump said. “It came back, and in a couple of cases came back very strongly.”

He said because of this, a long-term shutdown is not a viable strategy, after the U.S. closed much of its economy in March and April — only to see the virus spike again in certain states.

“It can come rearing back when you least expect it,” Mr. Trump said. “A permanent shutdown would no longer be the answer at all.”

Mr. Trump rattled off a list of countries, such as Australia and Japan, that are seeing spikes, and mentioned blue states where governors were praised for their responses, only to see an uptick.

But critics say the U.S., which has by far the most COVID-19 cases and deaths of any country in the world, likely didn’t shut down deep enough early on or have enough surveillance through testing to get the disease to manageable levels.

However, there have been some promising announcements on vaccine candidates in recent days.

Johnson & Johnson on Thursday announced the health company was starting human trials in its top vaccine candidate after there were promising results from injections in monkeys after a single dose.

The Trump administration has partnered with several companies, including Moderna and Pfizer, on vaccine development and distribution. Those companies both announced progress this week on Phase 3 clinical trials for their vaccine candidates.

The administration’s “Operation Warp Speed” is aiming to facilitate the development of a vaccine by the end of the year.

“We’re not going to cut any corners,” a senior administration official told reporters on a separate conference call Thursday. “If these vaccines are safe and effective, then the regulatory approval process goes appropriately.”

Public and private groups are working overtime to develop a vaccine, or at least therapeutics and treatments like plasma.

The use of plasma from recovered persons to treat patients with the same illness dates back to the 1890s and confers what's known as "passive immunity," since the recipient doesn't produce his or her own antibodies but uses the donor's, according to Nigel Paneth, a distinguished professor of epidemiology at Michigan State University.

"It works best when given early. It is probably ineffective as a last resort," he said. "Based on previous infections, ideally it should be given in the first three days of illness, though we don't have complete data for this on COVID."

So far, over 50,000 people have received plasma for COVID-19 in the U.S., according to an initiative coordinated by the Mayo Clinic.

Members of Congress who have tested positive for the virus and recovered have donated their plasma and urged fellow survivors to do the same.

As for face shields and eye coverings, other experts have said there could be some benefits but that there hasn't been extensive research on the topic.

Dr. Donald Milton, a University of Maryland professor who has written extensively on the airborne spread of the virus, said eye protection for people who must have face-to-face contact with others — such as dentists and barbers — is important.

"As personal protective equipment (PPE), eye protection is less important for other people, but still can offer some added protection in addition to face masks," Dr. Milton said.

He said face shields probably block some release of the virus into the air, but that he would not recommend using face shields as an alternative to masks.

"I also expect that they are not generally as effective at blocking release of virus into the air as are masks," he said.

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HEADLINE	07/30 Jobless claims: over 1M 19th straight week
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2020/07/30/business/stock-market-today-coronavirus?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage#1-43-million-filed-new-state-unemployment-claims-last-week
GIST	<p>The number of Americans filing new claims for state unemployment benefits totaled 1.43 million last week, the Labor Department reported Thursday.</p> <p>It was the 19th straight week that the tally exceeded one million, an unheard-of figure before the coronavirus pandemic. And it was the second weekly increase in a row after nearly four months of declines, a sign of how the rebound in cases has undercut the economy's nascent recovery. Claims for the previous week totaled 1.42 million.</p> <p>New claims for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, the government's program aimed at covering freelancers, the self-employed and other workers not covered by traditional unemployment benefits, totaled 830,000, down from 975,000 the week before. Those numbers, unlike the figures for state claims, are not seasonally adjusted.</p> <p>"We're still in a desperate situation," said Diane Swonk, chief economist at the accounting firm Grant Thornton in Chicago. Noting that weekly claims were in the 200,000 range before the pandemic brought widespread shutdowns in March, she added, "This is unique in terms of the speed and magnitude of the job losses."</p>

	<p>What's more, fears are growing that after rebounding strongly in May and June, the economy has run out of steam, with many states reversing the reopening of businesses.</p> <p>"Everyone wants to keep putting on rose-colored glasses, but it's blinding us to the reality of the situation and what we have to deal with," Ms. Swonk said.</p> <p>At the same time, the \$600 supplemental weekly unemployment payment from the federal government is ending, a potentially crippling financial blow to millions. Republicans have proposed replacing the supplement with a \$200 weekly payment, while Democrats want to extend it in full. "We're nowhere close to a deal," Mark Meadows, the White House chief of staff, said Wednesday.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 German economy: biggest slump 50yrs
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2020/07/30/business/stock-market-today-coronavirus?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage#the-german-economy-had-its-biggest-slump-in-50-years
GIST	<p>The German economy shrank 10.1 percent from April through June compared to the previous quarter, the biggest decline since the government started keeping the data in 1970.</p> <p>But the figure, which covers the peak period of pandemic lockdowns, may already be old news. Surveys of business managers indicate that Europe's largest economy is rebounding quickly, though it will probably be months or years before growth returns to normal, and the risk of further setbacks is high.</p> <p>The German labor market stabilized in July, according to data published Thursday by the nation's labor office. The number of unemployed people fell by 18,000 after rising sharply from April through June. But joblessness could rise later in the year if many businesses founder, and workers who are now on furlough become unemployed.</p> <p>Germany is in a better position than other European Union countries like Italy or Spain, in part because the government was effective in containing the spread. At the same time, new infections of the coronavirus are rising again as Germans return from holidays abroad, and there is fear of a second wave.</p> <p>The pandemic has left deep scars on the German economy even if the pain is less severe than in many other countries, including the United States.</p> <p>About 7 million people in Germany are on government-subsidized paid furloughs, and not all will get their jobs back. Companies like the automaker Daimler and Deutsche Bank are cutting their workforces permanently in response to changes in their industries that go beyond the pandemic.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 Torrential rains submerge 25% Bangladesh
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/30/climate/bangladesh-floods.html?action=click&module=Well&pgtype=Homepage&section=Climate%20and%20Environment
GIST	<p>Torrential rains have submerged at least a quarter of Bangladesh, washing away the few things that count as assets for some of the world's poorest people — their goats and chickens, houses of mud and tin, sacks of rice stored for the lean season.</p> <p>It is the latest calamity to strike the delta nation of 165 million people. Only two months ago, a cyclone pummeled the country's southwest. Along the coast, a rising sea has swallowed entire villages. And while it's too soon to ascertain what role climate change has played in these latest floods, Bangladesh is already witnessing a pattern of more severe and more frequent river flooding than in the past along</p>

the mighty Brahmaputra River, scientists say, and that is projected to worsen in the years ahead as climate change intensifies the rains.

“The suffering will go up,” said Sajedul Hasan, the humanitarian director of BRAC, an international development organization based in Bangladesh that is distributing food, cash and liquid soap to displaced people.

This is one of the most striking inequities of the modern era. Those who are least responsible for polluting Earth’s atmosphere are among those most hurt by its consequences. The average American is responsible for 33 times more planet-warming carbon dioxide than the average Bangladeshi.

This chasm has bedeviled climate diplomacy for a generation, and it is once again in stark relief as the coronavirus pandemic upends the global economy and threatens to push the world’s most vulnerable people deeper into ruin.

An estimated 24 to 37 percent of the country’s landmass is submerged, according to government estimates and satellite data. By Tuesday, [according to the most recent figures available](#), nearly a million homes were inundated and 4.7 million people were affected. At least 54 have died, most of them children.

The current floods, which are a result of intense rains upstream on the Brahmaputra, could last through the middle of August. Until then, Taijul Islam, a 30-year-old sharecropper whose house has washed away, will have to camp out in a makeshift bamboo shelter on slightly higher ground. At least he was able to salvage the tin sheet that was once the roof of his house. Without it, he said, his extended family of nine would be exposed to the elements.

Mr. Islam’s predicament is multiplied by the millions among those on the front lines of climate change. Vanuatu is literally sinking into the Pacific. Pastoralists in the Horn of Africa are being pushed [to the edge of survival](#) by back-to-back droughts. In the [megacity of Mumbai](#), the rains come in terrifying cloudbursts.

The inequity is striking, no matter which way you slice it. One recent analysis found that the [world’s richest 10 percent](#) are responsible for up to 40 percent of global environmental damage, including climate change, while the poorest 10 percent account for less than 5 percent. Another estimated that warming had [reduced incomes in the world’s poorest countries](#) by between 17 percent and 30 percent.

Poor countries have long sought a kind of reparations for what they call loss and damage from climate change. Rich countries, led by the United States and European Union, have resisted, mainly out of concern that they could be saddled with liability claims for climate damage.

It doesn’t help that the rich world has failed to deliver on a \$100 billion aid package to help poor countries cope, promised as part of the 2015 Paris accord.

Coronavirus recovery plans have lately begun to open the door to new discussions about debt relief linked to climate resilience.

In June, the [Alliance of Small Island Developing States](#), led by Belize, pressed for what it called a new compact with private and bilateral creditors “to deliver debt relief and increase resilience financing.”

Caribbean countries, with their economies ravaged by hurricanes in recent years, now find themselves falling deeper into debt as the pandemic dries up tourism revenues. A [study commissioned by the United Nations](#) found that the 20 most climate-vulnerable countries have paid more than \$40 billion in additional interest payments because of losses stemming from extreme weather events.

In Bangladesh, the flooding of the Brahmaputra reflects the unequal pain of extreme weather.

The floods began in June. In most cases, heavy rains upstream in neighboring India swelled the river basins that flow through Bangladesh before draining into the Bay of Bengal. Those who live along the Brahmaputra are no strangers to flooding. When the river swells, work stops, land erodes, people move to higher ground and wait for the waters to recede. They rely on their savings or aid to feed themselves. This year was different, though. By the time the river flooded, in June, people were already running out of food, said Mr. Hasan of BRAC.

Because of the lockdown, working people had all but stopped working. [Remittances from relatives abroad](#), many of them newly unemployed, had dried up. In the countryside, people had begun to sell their goats and cattle at bargain prices. They had no food to eat.

When the river first swelled, Taijul Islam, the sharecropper from the Kurigram district in the country's north, rushed to save his livestock — cattle, goats, chickens, ducks. A few, he rescued. Many, he lost. The river took away the small vegetable garden next to his house, then his house, where he had stashed roughly 1,300 pounds of rice. Then it washed away a small shop that he ran when he wasn't working on other people's land. Also the school that his 6-year-old son attended in the village.

All he can think of now is where he can go to earn a living. He is the sole breadwinner of his extended family. All nine of them had been living on rice, boiled potato and lentils. Vegetables are unaffordable, let alone fish or meat, which, he said, "are now unimaginable."

Akkas Ali, 48, had already been through a bad flood. He moved to Mr. Islam's village six years ago, when his old village washed into the Brahmaputra. Two weeks ago, as the river rose, breaking through its embankments, his four acres of farmland went underwater. The village mosque and market washed away. So, too, a secondary school where more than 250 children were enrolled. Mr. Ali worried where they would go to school now, if at all.

His house still stood this week, but the river, which had been a quarter mile away, had rushed dangerously close. He was sure it, too, would wash away soon.

The Brahmaputra is a fearsome, shape-shifting 2,400-mile river that erupts from the Tibetan Himalayas and spills into northeastern India before merging with the Ganges in Bangladesh and emptying into the Bay of Bengal. It irrigates vast areas of farmland but it's also unpredictable, often swallowing the islands that form within it, like the one where Mr. Ali's village once stood.

Climate change, too, is altering its fate — and that of the people who live along its banks. The rains are more unpredictable and the river is rising above dangerous levels far more frequently than it did before, according to 35 years of flooding data analyzed by A.K.M. Saiful Islam, a water management expert at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology in Dhaka.

The last five years alone have brought four major floods, eroding people's capacity to adapt, Dr. Islam said.

More and worse floods loom.

Even if average global temperature increase modestly — by 2 degrees Celsius over the average for preindustrial times — flooding along the [Brahmaputra in Bangladesh is projected to increase](#) by 24 percent. With an increase of 4 degrees Celsius, flooding is projected to increase by over 60 percent.

No matter what, Dr. Islam said, the country will have to adapt. That requires money to dredge rivers, maintain embankments, improve drainage and offer aid to those who are repeatedly displaced and impoverished.

Advocates for the poor say Bangladesh's predicament with disasters illustrates exactly why climate negotiations, postponed until 2021, need to deliver compensation for people who have not caused the problem.

	<p>“People are losing whatever little they have,” said Farah Kabir, the Bangladesh country director for ActionAid International. “When and how are they going to be supported? When is the global community going to take responsibility?”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 Portland clears park; step up security
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/jul/30/portland-clears-protesters-park-part-deal-get-feds/
GIST	<p>Police early Thursday cleared the park that had been used as the staging area for attacks on the federal courthouse in Portland, Oregon, as local officials began to make good on their promise to step up security so federal forces could draw back.</p> <p>The move came after another night of clashes that saw demonstrators throw objects and breach the fence surrounding the Hatfield Courthouse, and federal police push back with tear gas.</p> <p>The protesters chanted “Feds go home,” aware that under a deal between Gov. Kate Brown and the Trump administration, Homeland Security agents and officers are supposed to begin leaving Thursday and state police will take over the lead on calming protests.</p> <p>Portland police announced the park was to be cleared around 5 a.m. — including press. Those who remained were subject to arrest, police said. An hour later, they announced on Twitter that the move had been successful.</p> <p>Police said pedestrians are banned from the streets around the park, which effectively creates a buffer zone to protect the courthouse. Arrests had already been made Thursday morning for violating the lockdown, police said.</p> <p>“No arrests have been made at this time,” the Portland Police Bureau said.</p> <p>City Mayor Ted Wheeler said the clearance was requested by the state police “as part of the plan for federal officers to leave our community.”</p> <p>Federal officials say getting local police to step up had been their goal all along. They said if police had protected the courthouse during the riots, the additional Homeland Security agents and officers wouldn’t have been necessary.</p> <p>Mr. Wheeler has been at the center of those complaints.</p> <p>Two years ago, when demonstrators attacked an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) building in the city, shutting it down for weeks, he ordered city police not to get involved.</p> <p>Portland police say they’d also been told to keep hands off this year as racial justice demonstrations, which erupted after the death of George Floyd, spiraled into nightly clashes at the federal courthouse.</p> <p>President Trump, weighing in on Twitter from Washington Thursday morning, said Ms. Brown, the Democratic governor, still wasn’t doing enough.</p> <p>“She must clear out, and in some cases arrest, the Anarchists & Agitators in Portland. If she can’t do it, the Federal Government will do it for her. We will not be leaving until there is safety!” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 China reveals 18,000 stuck in quarantine
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SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/world/china-sees-spike-in-covid-19-cases-6-months-after-who-declares-coronavirus-a-health-emergency
GIST	<p>China on Thursday said it still has more than 18,000 people stuck in quarantine amid a spike in COVID-19 cases across the country.</p> <p>The admission comes six months after the novel coronavirus was declared a global health emergency by the World Health Organization. Since then, the virus has spread and infected more than 17 million people around the world and killed 667,808 — a number that is increasing daily.</p> <p>More than 66 percent of China's quarantined residents are in the western province of Xinjiang. Officials there have locked down some residential areas, restricted public transit and ordered mass testing as authorities struggle to contain the flare-up.</p> <p>The last time Beijing reported more than 18,000 people who had been in close contact with confirmed coronavirus cases was on April 3.</p> <p>At the height of the pandemic, the number ballooned to 189,000, according to China's National Health Commission.</p> <p>On Wednesday, China reported 105 new cases of COVID-19.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 Tech giants \$28B in profit
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/30/technology/tech-company-earnings-amazon-apple-facebook-google.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage
GIST	<p>A day after lawmakers grilled the chief executives of the biggest tech companies about their size and power, Amazon, Apple, Alphabet and Facebook reported surprisingly healthy quarterly financial results, defying one of the worst economic downturns on record.</p> <p>Even though the companies felt some sting from the spending slowdown, they demonstrated, as critics have argued, that they are operating on a different playing field from the rest of the economy.</p> <p>Amazon's sales were up 40 percent from a year ago and its profit doubled. Facebook's profit jumped 98 percent. Even though the pandemic shuttered many of its stores, Apple increased sales of all its products in every part of the world and posted \$11.25 billion in profit. Advertising revenue dropped for Alphabet, the laggard of the bunch, but it still did better than Wall Street had expected.</p> <p>"The strong continue to get stronger," said Dan Ives, managing director of equity research at Wedbush Securities. "As many companies are falling by the wayside, the tech stalwarts continue to gain muscle and power in this environment."</p> <p>The tech companies' financial performance was a remarkable contrast to the overall health of the U.S. economy. The Commerce Department said on Thursday that the country's gross domestic product fell 9.5 percent in the second quarter of the year as consumers cut back spending. It was the steepest drop on record.</p> <p>Combined, the companies reported \$28.6 billion in quarterly net profit, underscoring how regulatory scrutiny remains more background noise and a distraction for them rather than an imminent threat to their businesses.</p> <p>On Wednesday, a congressional antitrust panel questioned the companies' leaders — Jeff Bezos of Amazon, Tim Cook of Apple, Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook and Sundar Pichai of Alphabet — about their market power and business practices.</p>

It was part of a broader inquiry by regulators and lawmakers into the dominance of the tech giants, with open investigations from the Justice Department, the Federal Trade Commission and state attorneys general.

The spectacle of the chief executives of the four companies, worth nearly \$5 trillion by market capitalization combined, appearing before a House subcommittee was historic. But antitrust investigations often take years, especially if regulators seek more drastic measures like breaking up companies.

The pandemic has reinforced the advantages held by the big tech companies. As consumers stay home, demand for Amazon's shopping site surged, while companies are turning to its cloud computing products to keep their services up and running. Apple said the shift to working and learning from home had led more people to splurge on Apple's devices and use its services.

"Our products and services are very relevant to our customers' lives, and in some cases, even more during the pandemic than ever before," Luca Maestri, Apple's finance chief, said in an interview. He noted, however, that Apple could have made several billion dollars more if not for the pandemic.

Facebook and Google continue to be important to marketers and they are weathering the downturn in advertising better than rivals. Facebook shrugged off a spending slowdown, hailing record levels of engagement with its products.

Alphabet said revenue from Google search ads fell 10 percent — pushing the company's overall revenue lower for the first time in the company's history — but that still was better than rivals. Last week, Microsoft reported an 18 percent slide in search advertising revenue.

Since the beginning of March, the companies' stock prices have risen by an average of 35 percent, compared with a 10 percent rise in the S.&P. 500.

Amazon

Buoyed by a pandemic-induced surge in online shopping, [Amazon had \\$88.9 billion in quarterly sales](#), up 40 percent from a year earlier. Profit doubled, to \$5.2 billion, even though the company invested in expanding warehouses and other ways to increase capacity.

"Simply put, Covid-19, in our view, has injected Amazon with a growth hormone," Tom Forte, an analyst at the investment bank D.A. Davidson & Company, wrote in a recent note to investors.

In April, Mr. Bezos [told](#) investors to expect no operating profit, and maybe even a loss, as the company planned to spend about \$4 billion on coronavirus-related expenses like temporary pay increases, declines in warehouse efficiency because of social distancing, and \$300 million for testing its work force for the virus.

But even those costs did not compare to the immense surge in demand, with online retail sales up 48 percent.

On a call with reporters, Amazon declined to say if it would give its warehouse workers virus-related bonuses or raises in the current quarter, but added that pandemic-related expenses would fall to \$2 billion in the quarter.

Sales at Amazon's lucrative cloud computing business, whose customers include major corporations and small start-ups, grew 29 percent, to \$10.8 billion, falling short of analyst expectations, though it was more profitable than they had expected.

Facebook

Facebook's revenue for the second quarter rose 11 percent from a year earlier to \$18.7 billion, while profits jumped 98 percent to \$5.2 billion. The results were well above analysts' estimates of \$17.3 billion in revenue with a profit of \$3.9 billion, according to data provided by FactSet.

Despite increasing scrutiny from regulators, questions about [its role in subverting elections](#) and how people use the platform to spread misinformation, neither users nor advertisers have shown an inclination to stop using Facebook.

More than three billion people now regularly come to Facebook or one of its family of apps, as the services have overtaken much of the developed world. And some 2.47 billion people use one or more of Facebook's apps every day.

The company said its number of monthly active users rose 12 percent from a year ago and added that it was seeing record levels of engagement and usage this year because of shelter-in-place orders around the world.

In late June, a grass-roots campaign, Stop Hate for Profit, rallied many of the top advertisers on Facebook to [reduce their spending](#) because of issues with hate speech on the site.

Facebook cautioned investors on Thursday that fallout from the ad boycott was noticeable in July and warned that greater economic turmoil from the pandemic could eventually hurt Facebook's bottom line.

Apple

Despite the global [economic slowdown](#), people kept buying Apple devices en masse and paid the tech giant billions of dollars more for apps and services on those gadgets.

Apple said its sales rose 11 percent to \$59.7 billion and its profits increased 12 percent to \$11.25 billion. Both figures handily beat analysts' expectations, with Wall Street having forecast declines in both areas.

Sales were particularly strong for iPads and Mac computers, as the public was increasingly forced to work and socialize virtually. Revenue also surged in its internet-services business, which include Apple's cut of sales from the App Store, the subject of antitrust investigations in [the United States](#) and [Europe](#).

Even the iPhone, which remains the company's biggest seller, had a slight increase in sales for only the second time in the past seven quarters.

Apple also announced a stock split on Thursday that would quadruple its number of shares, allowing people to buy a share in the company for a quarter of the current stock price, which closed at \$384.76 on Thursday.

Alphabet

Google's parent company, Alphabet, reported its first-ever decline in quarterly revenue, hurt by a slowdown in spending by advertisers. The company posted revenue of \$38.3 billion and a profit of \$6.96 billion — significantly higher than what Wall Street analysts had predicted.

Ruth Porat, Alphabet's chief financial officer, said advertising revenue "gradually improved" as the quarter went on. The decline came largely from lower sales of advertisements that run alongside Google's search results, but the company's efforts to diversify its business paid off as revenue from YouTube ads and its cloud computing business grew.

When asked in a call with financial analysts about the congressional hearing, Mr. Pichai said the company would have to learn to live with the investigations.

"The scrutiny is going to be here for a while and we're committed to working through it," he said.

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HEADLINE

07/30 Native tribes devastated yet overlooked

SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/30/us/native-americans-coronavirus-data.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage
GIST	<p>HARRAH, Wash. — As the coronavirus outbreak in Washington State’s Yakima County worsened last month, Tashina Nunez recognized more and more of the patients who arrived in her hospital. They had coughs, fevers and, in some severe cases, respiratory failure. And many of them were her acquaintances and neighbors, members of the tribes that make up the Yakama Nation.</p> <p>Ms. Nunez, a nurse at a hospital in Yakima County and a Yakama Nation descendant, noticed that Native Americans, who make up about 7 percent of the county’s population, seemed to account for many of the hospital’s virus patients. Because the hospital does not routinely record race and ethnicity data, she said, it was hard for Ms. Nunez to know for certain.</p> <p>“Not being counted is not new to us,” she said. Without firm figures, she and other health care providers for Native communities said they struggled to know where or how to intervene to stop the spread. “You don’t know how bad it is until it’s too late,” Ms. Nunez said.</p> <p>By mid-July, more than 650 members of the Yakama Nation, in central Washington State, had contracted the virus — about 6 percent of the total membership. Twenty-eight people have died, Delano Saluskin, chairman of the Yakama Nation, said in a video update.</p> <p>“We all grieve those losses,” he said. “This has been devastating for many families on the reservation and it means that, every week, a family member is impacted.”</p> <p>The situation among the Yakama Nation is not unique. Even with significant gaps in the data that is available, there are strong indications that Native Americans have been disproportionately affected by the coronavirus.</p> <p>The rate of known cases in the eight counties with the largest populations of Native Americans is nearly double the national average, a New York Times analysis has found. The analysis cannot determine which individuals are testing positive for the virus, but these counties are home to one in six U.S. residents who describe themselves in census surveys as non-Hispanic and American Indian or Alaska Native.</p> <p>And there are many smaller counties with significant populations of Native Americans that have elevated case rates, including Yakima County. The Times identified at least 15 counties that have elevated case rates and are home to sizable numbers of Native American residents. Those counties ranged from large metropolitan areas in Arizona to rural communities in Nebraska and Mississippi.</p> <p>“I feel as though tribal nations have an effective death sentence when the scale of this pandemic, if it continues to grow, exceeds the public resources available,” said Fawn Sharp, the president of the Quinault Indian Nation and of the National Congress of American Indians.</p> <p>The situation has been stark in the Navajo Nation, where high infection rates have created a crisis in the largest reservation in the United States. But health officials say the same worrying trends are repeating in Native communities across the country, and congressional leaders have prompted the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights to examine the health disparities compounded by the pandemic.</p> <p>In New Mexico, Native American and Alaska Native people have accounted for nearly 40 percent of virus cases even though they make up 9 percent of the population.</p> <p>Native Americans in the Phoenix area have been infected at four times the rate of their white neighbors. The Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation extended a shelter-in-place order on July 18 because infections were continuing to multiply. The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community also reported mounting infections this month.</p> <p>Outbreaks have been reported among the Lumbee Tribe in North Carolina, Choctaw communities in Oklahoma and Mississippi, and at two reservations in Thurston County, Neb.</p>

[Hospitalization rates published](#) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also suggest that Native Americans are overrepresented among those who become seriously ill from the virus. The data about Covid-19 is collected from a sample of counties and provides an incomplete picture, but the conclusion is unsurprising to epidemiologists who study the health of Native Americans.

“The disparities we see there with Covid are aligned with those that we see for hospitalizations and deaths due to influenza and other respiratory viruses,” said Allison Barlow, director of the Center for American Indian Health at Johns Hopkins University.

Native Americans — particularly those living on reservations — are more prone to contract the virus because of crowded housing conditions that make social distancing difficult, she said. And years of underfunded health systems, food and water insecurity and other factors contribute to underlying health conditions that can make the illness more severe once contracted.

Yet understanding the extent of how Native American people have been disproportionately affected by Covid-19 is extremely difficult.

Calculating how many people who identify as Native American have had the virus and how many have died of it is nearly impossible because federal data tracking individual coronavirus cases often omits information about the race and ethnicity of people; such information is missing from about half the cases reported to the C.D.C., which serves as a clearinghouse for cases reported by state and local authorities.

Even when such information is collected, it is uncertain how accurate it is. Miscounting can begin at testing sites and health clinics, public health officials said, where health care workers sometimes do not record a patient’s race and ethnicity data, or simply guess without asking a patient.

The Indian Health Service has identified at least 30,987 cases among Native Americans and Alaska Natives, but tribal nations are not required to share their data. Just under half of tribal health centers and 61 percent of urban health services serving Native Americans have provided case information, an I.H.S. spokeswoman said.

After suing the C.D.C., [The Times obtained a database with the characteristics of 1.5 million individuals](#) who tested positive for the virus through the end of May. The data showed that people who were Black or Latino were three times as likely to become infected as people who were white.

The data provided only part of the picture, though, when it came to Native Americans because of gaps in the data: It included geographic information and racial classifications for just 974 of the 3,143 counties in the nation, and did not include some of the places where Native American people make up large parts of the population. What information there was did show a disparity: The infection rate for Native Americans was 1.7 times the rate for white people over all, and somewhat higher in younger age groups.

In the Yakama Nation, Haver Jim Ptxunu, a 42-year-old resident who works for the tribal power company and helps run a nonprofit group called the Peacekeeper Society, said he and his wife contracted the virus in June.

“It was physical torture,” he said, adding that one of his most debilitating symptoms was a constant eye irritation that he described like “a bad sunburn, but inside your eyes.” Still, he felt fortunate that he and his wife recovered after about three weeks, because he had seen a few older couples on the reservation die.

The Peacekeeper Society operates a weekly food giveaway and delivers food and cleaning supplies to households where people have fallen ill. Mr. Jim said he suspected he caught the virus while out on such a delivery.

As soon as he recovered, Mr. Jim said, he returned to his work distributing food. On a hot July afternoon, he helped distribute boxes filled with potatoes, zucchini, cabbage and onions to a line of hundreds of cars. Families could choose between chicken and salmon waiting in two kiddie pools stocked with ice.

Adding to the toll of the virus among Native Americans has been swift and grim economic fallout. “People lost jobs really quick,” he said. “We went from serving a dozen people a week to hundreds.”

Tribal epidemiology centers have fought for months to obtain case information from the C.D.C., and are only now receiving snippets of what they requested, several of the dozen centers in the United States said. Without an accurate portrait of the rates of illness within their populations, tribal nations have struggled to receive federal funds aimed at economic recovery and protective gear.

“I think this historic, deep neglect is just coming into sharper focus because of Covid,” said Liz Malerba, policy and legislative affairs director for the United South and Eastern Tribes, a tribal epidemiology center. “It’s always been there, but now you are seeing more clearly what the depths are.”

A spokeswoman from the C.D.C. said the agency was working to fill gaps in its data to better understand the impact of the virus.

“There is still more work to be done to ensure complete race and ethnicity data in the case report forms,” said the spokeswoman, Jasmine Reed. Since April, the agency has increased its collection of race and ethnicity data from patients tested for the coronavirus, she said.

Ms. Malerba said many tribes did not receive federal emergency funds equal to their needs because the Treasury Department allocated the money using census data that undercounted tribal memberships.

“If you eliminate us in the data, you have effectively eliminated us for the allocation of resources,” said Abigail Echo-Hawk, the director of the Urban Indian Health Institute.

In California, tribal epidemiologists have tried to uncover cases themselves. The California Department of Public Health publishes a daily count of coronavirus cases, and California Tribal Epidemiology Center pulls data from that tally in order to track the virus among the 87,000 Native people who access tribal health programs in the state.

“We can only see the number but we don’t know more information about them, where they reside, their specific symptoms,” said Aurimar Ayala, the center’s epidemiology manager. “It means we cannot further investigate those cases.”

She added that the epidemiology center had created a workaround by contacting local clinics and tracking down the cases, but said that it was a cumbersome solution.

Although health officials are still struggling to fully understand the impact of the coronavirus on Native American people, the severity of the crisis in Yakama Nation is clear to residents, some said.

“It’s devastating to our community,” Ms. Nunez said. “We have these elders that have lived through residential schools and the outlawing of their own religion — they’ve been keeping this culture alive and now Covid hits and it’s taking them from us.”

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HEADLINE	07/30 Federal agents in Portland continue
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jul/30/federal-agents-portland-oregon-trump-troops
GIST	Federal agents accused of behaving like an occupying army were expected to begin pulling out of central Portland , Oregon, on Thursday in an embarrassing climbdown by the White House.

But on Wednesday night the forces that have been dubbed by some as “Trump’s troops” made it clear they did not intend to leave quietly.

The Department of Homeland Security paramilitaries guarding the federal courthouse in downtown Portland that has become the [focus of protests](#) fired tear gas, fired projectiles and stun grenades into the early hours of Thursday morning against hundreds of demonstrators.

Some protesters turned out to proclaim victory over the paramilitaries sent to the city by the US president.

The federal agents then drove the demonstrators back several blocks in a stronger use of force than other recent nights, and made more arrests.

The [announcement](#) by Oregon’s governor, Kate Brown, earlier on Wednesday that she had secured an agreement with the White House for most of the federal forces to withdraw from the courthouse, and for it to be guarded by state police instead, was greeted with a mix of glee and scepticism by the protesters.

Some regarded the move as a humiliating defeat for Trump who sent the federal agents to Portland a month ago, proclaiming they would bring an end to “anarchy” in the city after weeks of Black Lives Matter protests. That has clearly failed.

“I’m still here and they’re leaving. I’d say that whatever it was they came to do, they didn’t do it,” said Amy Tulip, wearing a helmet and gas mask, and holding a “Fuck Trump, Fuck the Feds” sign.

“I’ve been here every night saying the feds have to go because they were sent to terrorise us. So now they’re going, yeah, that’s a victory,” she added.

Other demonstrators were sceptical that the federal agents would really leave after the head of US homeland security said they would remain in the area until they were sure the courthouse was protected.

However, Brown said that was no more than an attempt by the White House to save face after what amounted to a defeat for Trump’s attempt to use federal forces for political ends.

She told Oregon public radio “the plan is very very clear” and that the federal agents “will be out of downtown Portland from Thursday”.

Only US Marshalls, who routinely have responsibility for guarding federal buildings, would remain. She said they would not be taking the lead in protecting the courthouse.

“Trump’s troops are leaving the city. That’s a good thing,” said Brown. “I was really clear in my conversations with the Trump administration. I told them that Trump’s troops needed to leave. The federal officers here in the city brought violence and they brought strife to our community. That needed to end.”

Trump tweeted that if the federal government had not sent in the agents then “there would be no Portland – it would be burned and beaten to the ground”.

He also threatened to send them back.

“If the mayor and governor do not stop the Crime and Violence from the Anarchists and Agitators immediately, the Federal Government will go in and do the job that local law enforcement was supposed to do!” the president added.

For all Trump’s bravado and statements from his officials trying to spin the withdrawal agreement as having secured the president’s goal of ensuring the federal courthouse was protected, it amounted to a significant retreat.

Trump originally suggested that federal forces, drawn from the border patrol, immigration service and US Marshals, were sent to Portland to end a weeks long takeover of a small part of the downtown by supporters of Black Lives Matter. At the time, he implied they would restore order across the city.

The DHS agents not only failed to do that but their presence provoked much larger demonstrations, particularly over some of the violent tactics they used and the fear that Trump was using the federal agents to create conflict for political ends. They also prompted a backlash in other parts of the country after agents in camouflage were filmed snatching protesters from the streets in unmarked vans.

“The administration sent in the troops to score points with their political base. It’s really clear that this political strategy has backfired,” said Brown.

It’s not clear if the deployment of the state police will defuse the situation given weeks of conflict between protesters and the Portland city police before the federal agents arrived. But some of the demonstrators on Wednesday night took comfort that state forces are independent of the man in the White House.

“It’s a step in the right direction. At least the state police are not under Trump’s control,” said a demonstrator who gave his name only as Alex. “I was afraid he would send the National Guard in and it would be chaos.”

Brown said she told the state police to “use each and every strategy to deescalate” protests and avoid the level of force used by the federal agents. But she said they will protect the courthouse.

“They will use crowd control tactics only as a last resort,” she said.

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HEADLINE	07/30 John Lewis' final essay
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/30/opinion/john-lewis-civil-rights-america.html
GIST	<p>While my time here has now come to an end, I want you to know that in the last days and hours of my life you inspired me. You filled me with hope about the next chapter of the great American story when you used your power to make a difference in our society. Millions of people motivated simply by human compassion laid down the burdens of division. Around the country and the world you set aside race, class, age, language and nationality to demand respect for human dignity.</p> <p>That is why I had to visit Black Lives Matter Plaza in Washington, though I was admitted to the hospital the following day. I just had to see and feel it for myself that, after many years of silent witness, the truth is still marching on.</p> <p>Emmett Till was my George Floyd. He was my Rayshard Brooks, Sandra Bland and Breonna Taylor. He was 14 when he was killed, and I was only 15 years old at the time. I will never ever forget the moment when it became so clear that he could easily have been me. In those days, fear constrained us like an imaginary prison, and troubling thoughts of potential brutality committed for no understandable reason were the bars.</p> <p>Though I was surrounded by two loving parents, plenty of brothers, sisters and cousins, their love could not protect me from the unholy oppression waiting just outside that family circle. Unchecked, unrestrained violence and government-sanctioned terror had the power to turn a simple stroll to the store for some Skittles or an innocent morning jog down a lonesome country road into a nightmare. If we are to survive as one unified nation, we must discover what so readily takes root in our hearts that could rob Mother Emanuel Church in South Carolina of her brightest and best, shoot unwitting concertgoers in Las Vegas and choke to death the hopes and dreams of a gifted violinist like Elijah McClain.</p> <p>Like so many young people today, I was searching for a way out, or some might say a way in, and then I heard the voice of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on an old radio. He was talking about the philosophy and</p>

discipline of nonviolence. He said we are all complicit when we tolerate injustice. He said it is not enough to say it will get better by and by. He said each of us has a moral obligation to stand up, speak up and speak out. When you see something that is not right, you must say something. You must do something. Democracy is not a state. It is an act, and each generation must do its part to help build what we called the Beloved Community, a nation and world society at peace with itself.

Ordinary people with extraordinary vision can redeem the soul of America by getting in what I call good trouble, necessary trouble. Voting and participating in the democratic process are key. The vote is the most powerful nonviolent change agent you have in a democratic society. You must use it because it is not guaranteed. You can lose it.

You must also study and learn the lessons of history because humanity has been involved in this soul-wrenching, existential struggle for a very long time. People on every continent have stood in your shoes, though decades and centuries before you. The truth does not change, and that is why the answers worked out long ago can help you find solutions to the challenges of our time. Continue to build union between movements stretching across the globe because we must put away our willingness to profit from the exploitation of others.

Though I may not be here with you, I urge you to answer the highest calling of your heart and stand up for what you truly believe. In my life I have done all I can to demonstrate that the way of peace, the way of love and nonviolence is the more excellent way. Now it is your turn to let freedom ring.

When historians pick up their pens to write the story of the 21st century, let them say that it was your generation who laid down the heavy burdens of hate at last and that peace finally triumphed over violence, aggression and war. So I say to you, walk with the wind, brothers and sisters, and let the spirit of peace and the power of everlasting love be your guide.

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HEADLINE	07/30 Putin faces protest in Russia Far East
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/in-russias-far-east-putin-faces-protests-from-people-who-rarely-protected-before-11596107438?mod=hp_lead_pos12
GIST	<p>KHABAROVSK, Russia—In this remote city, thousands of miles east of Moscow, Russian President Vladimir Putin is facing a challenge to his rule from a place that has rarely protested before.</p> <p>It is coming from the likes of Ivan Rubanov, a 64-year-old grandfather, who has joined tens of thousands of people demonstrating against the arrest of a popular opposition party governor earlier this month.</p> <p>But like many others, his anger extends further than the arrest. Mr. Rubanov, a retired factory foreman, says he is angry with Mr. Putin for paying little heed to the struggle of ordinary people in Russia's Far East, a resource-rich but long-neglected region that during the Stalin years was a place to send political prisoners.</p> <p>“My children and grandchildren have no future, no prospects under this type of rule,” Mr. Rubanov said at a recent protest, the third he had attended this month. “My hands are shaking with anger.”</p> <p>The arrest of Sergei Furgal, the deposed governor of the broader Khabarovsk region, on allegations that he was involved in organizing two murders and an attempted homicide 15 years ago, has spurred the largest eruption of popular anger at Mr. Putin in the Far East in years. Mr. Furgal has denied any wrongdoing.</p> <p>Protesters have poured into the streets, arguing that Mr. Furgal's arrest was trumped up and was a warning from Moscow not to defy the Kremlin.</p> <p>Protests like the recent ones in Khabarovsk—which sits just 16 miles from the border with China and is an important economic and political outpost for the Kremlin—are rare in the Far East of Russia. They follow</p>

a referendum [earlier this month](#) on constitutional changes that included a provision to allow Mr. Putin to potentially stay in power until 2036.

Some 78% of Russians endorsed the changes. But the Khabarovsk region, which has the same name as the city and is one of the 11 regions that comprise Russia's Far East federal district, recorded one of the lowest levels of support in the referendum, with 62% voting in favor. Turnout was among the lowest in the country at around 44%, compared with 68% nation-wide.

Support for the constitutional amendments and voter participation was also low in three other territories in the Far East—Yakutia, Magadan and Kamchatka—where people in some cities have held demonstrations in support of those in Khabarovsk.

“This is no longer just a local issue,” said Pyotr Yemelyanov, one of two local lawmakers who quit the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, to which Mr. Furgal belongs, to protest his arrest.

Mr. Furgal, a sandy-haired 50-year-old, is a charismatic figure with a loyal following among local residents. He defeated the candidate of the ruling United Russia party in a 2018 election win that analysts said was largely the result of a protest vote against the Kremlin over an unpopular pension reform earlier that year that raised the retirement age for Russians.

Rich in diamonds, timber and coal reserves, the Far East is only a little smaller than China in terms of landmass but has a population of less than 7 million. It is significantly less developed than the rest of Russia, held back by crumbling transport links and endemic corruption and with fewer social and cultural opportunities. The weather can also be harsh. Summer temperatures soar past 100 degrees Fahrenheit and fall to minus 35 in winter.

“It isn't easy to live here,” said Alexander Golovko, an independent political consultant in Khabarovsk. “We have low salaries and the level of buying power is lower than in Moscow.”

Seven time zones and almost 4,000 miles from Moscow, Khabarovsk feels detached from Russia's capital.

“If I need to contact Moscow, I have to reset my internal clock,” said Natalya Dryunina, who runs an auditing company. “There is a feeling of remoteness, detachment. There's no substitute for live communication.”

Many residents viewed Mr. Furgal's arrest as emblematic of Moscow's heavy-handedness and disregard for the region. The Kremlin's decision to replace him with an outsider who has never lived in the region before compounded the resentment problem, some residents say.

Vladimir Lepeshkin believes Russia's political elite are growing rich off regular Russians and Moscow's disregard for the people's choice of leader in Khabarovsk spurred him to join the protests.

“I am not satisfied with the politics in the country,” said the 38-year-old dancer. “I am not satisfied with the obvious theft. There are no prospects.”

Others suggest Mr. Furgal was an ineffective leader whose social media profile was more impressive than his ability to deliver. As Mr. Rubanov held his sign at the recent protest, a woman screamed at him, saying Mr. Furgal had done little to help the region.

The Kremlin has said that, based on evidence from the federal investigative committee, authorities were justified in arresting Mr. Furgal for his alleged participation in the murder of two businessmen in the region in 2004 and 2005.

“The head of a Russian region has never been accused of involvement in the most serious crime of murder,” presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Tuesday.

Moscow wants to keep a tight hold of the area, both politically and economically. The Far East is Russia's gateway to China, and the two countries are more closely aligned than for decades. They engage in frequent military exercises, and China also now imports more oil from Russia than Saudi Arabia. In 2018 Chinese President Xi Jinping called Mr. Putin his "closest, most intimate friend."

The region also provides easy access to other Pacific markets and key trade routes. Mr. Putin has laid out a series of development plans for the region, including a \$600 million project to develop the port at Zvezda, a large shipbuilding and engineering complex in the Far East town of Bolshoy Kamen, to expand exports to Asia, and a new site for space launches at Vostochny in the Far East Amur region.

Shortly after Mr. Furgal's arrest, the government announced plans to allocate some \$28 billion to finance the development of the Far East through 2024.

A financial boost is welcome news for residents such as Lyudmila Semenova, who have been hurt by the economic contraction.

On a recent afternoon, she sat among rows of vendors at the city's central market who were trying to hawk everything from vegetables and canned goods to artificial flowers and ladies underwear. The 73-year-old grandmother said she had to trade at the market to supplement her \$270 monthly pension, which she said wasn't enough.

There were few takers for her bundles of homegrown cucumbers and two tubs of black currants.

Many Khabarovsk residents already have stronger ties to Asia than to Moscow. Some of the stalls at the market are owned by Chinese entrepreneurs but operated by Russians, according to informal conversations with vendors. Before the coronavirus pandemic halted travel, Inna Gureeva's travel agency offered direct flights to Thailand and Vietnam, which are closer to Khabarovsk than Russian capital. A quick getaway to Europe isn't practical from the Far East, Ms. Gureeva said.

Ms. Dryunina, the auditor, usually vacations in South Korea and her daughter is learning Korean.

"We love to go there to relax because we are so close," she said.

The Kremlin might find rebuilding its own bridges with the people of the Far East harder. So far, Mr. Putin has focused on coaxing Russians from other parts of the country to head east to reverse the brain drain that has depopulated the region in recent decades. His homesteading program promises a total of 200 million hectares, close to 494 million acres, to anyone willing to make the move.

There have been few takers. Moscow's planners aim to make the area more attractive for newcomers with new infrastructure spending, but until then, resentment appears likely to continue.

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HEADLINE	07/30 Passenger traffic at SEA slipping
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/boeing-aerospace/passenger-traffic-at-sea-tac-is-slipping-coronavirus-economy-daily-chart/
GIST	<p>Another week, another slight drop in the number of passengers going through Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.</p> <p>It's a notable reversal in direction after three months when travelers grew week by week, though at levels far below pre-pandemic numbers.</p> <p>The anemic volume helps explain the dire straits of the airlines, and Boeing. On Wednesday, Boeing announced further slowdowns in production and additional job cuts.</p>

The daily average over the latest week was 23.4% of last year's comparable period, Port of Seattle data shows.

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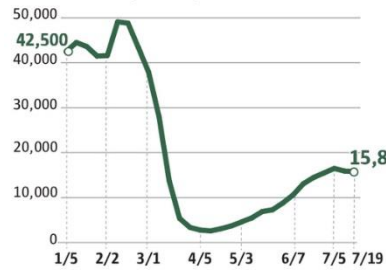
CORONAVIRUS ECONOMY DAILY CHART

Sea-Tac Airport sees another dip in travelers

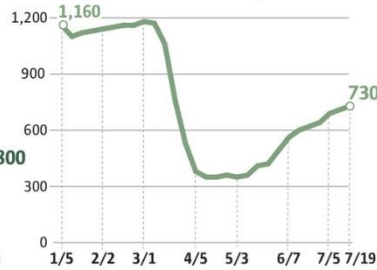
The average number of passengers going through Sea-Tac slipped again, though aircraft came and went slightly more frequently than the prior week.

Week's daily average, for Sunday through Saturday

TSA-screened passenger volume



Aircraft takeoffs and landings



Source: Port of Seattle

THE SEATTLE TIMES

HEADLINE 07/30 Record decline US economy

SOURCE <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2020/07/30/business/stock-market-today-coronavirus?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage>

GIST Economic output fell at its fastest pace on record last spring as the coronavirus pandemic forced [businesses across the United States to close their doors](#) and kept millions of Americans shut in their homes for weeks.

Gross domestic product — the broadest measure of goods and services produced — fell 9.5 percent in the second quarter of the year, the Commerce Department said Thursday. On an annualized basis, the [standard way of reporting quarterly economic data](#), G.D.P. fell at a rate of 32.9 percent.

The collapse was unprecedented in its speed and breathtaking in its severity. The only possible comparisons in modern American history came during the Great Depression and the demobilization after World War II, both of which occurred before the advent of modern economic statistics.

Unlike past recessions, this one was a result of a conscious decision to suspend economic activity to slow the spread of the virus. Congress pumped trillions of dollars into the economy to sustain households and businesses, limit long-term damage and allow for a rapid rebound.

The plan worked at first. In recent weeks, however, [cases have surged in much of the country](#). Data from public and private sources indicate [a pullback in economic activity](#), reflecting consumer unease and renewed shutdowns.

“In another world, a sharp drop in activity would have been just a good, necessary blip while we addressed the virus,” said Heather Boushey, president of the Washington Center for Equitable Growth, a progressive think tank. “From where we sit in July, we know that this wasn’t just a short-term blip.”

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HEADLINE 07/30 Calif. faces tsunami of evictions?

SOURCE <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jul/30/california-covid-19-evictions-landlords-tenants>

GIST Christopher Borunda’s landlords locked him out. Theresa Ribeiro’s landlord left vulgar voicemails threatening to remove her. Denise Briggs’s landlord said he was selling her house and she couldn’t stay.

Some [California](#) tenants have faced increasingly aggressive eviction efforts over the last month, despite emergency protections meant to preserve people's housing during the coronavirus pandemic. And although advocates have urged state officials to strengthen the rules, key renters' protections are set to expire without new state plans in place.

The result, experts say, could be catastrophic.

Amid rising coronavirus infections and a worsening economic crisis, hundreds of thousands of renters are now at risk of becoming homeless in California, potentially exacerbating the state's dire housing crisis. In addition, advocates fear the lack of protections will embolden some landlords to resort to hostile methods to get their renters out, at a time when many Californians have nowhere to go.

With so many families facing huge rent debt, advocates are urging the state to act. The only viable solution, some activists say, is rent relief – a move that elected officials have so far resisted.

“When talking about the scale of eviction and mass displacement, it's pretty unimaginable,” said Ananya Roy, director of the Institute on Inequality and Democracy at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). The state, she said, was headed towards even more dire conditions than the shanty towns or “Hoovervilles” of the 1930s. “This will be worse than the Great Depression.”

A crisis becomes a ‘catastrophe’

When California became one of the first states to shut down in March and millions lost their jobs, Governor Gavin Newsom ordered a statewide delay on imposing evictions for people who could not pay rent. Some local jurisdictions passed their own measures – Los Angeles and some Bay Area [governments](#) gave tenants one year to pay back the rent they owed, while the city of Oakland barred landlords from evicting people due to non-payment during the crisis. One of the most critical protections came from the state court system, which stopped processing evictions in April.

The protections were not comprehensive or strictly enforced – [landlords continued to pursue evictions across the state](#), in some cases successfully. But the emergency rules did delay total mayhem.

That could soon change, though. The state's judiciary council announced last week that it was considering rescinding its halt on eviction processing, a move that would reopen the courts to enforce removal cases against tenants. At the same time, Republicans in Congress are seeking to cut extra unemployment benefits, which could be particularly hard on California, where the jobless rate has hovered at 15%. Experts are now predicting a “tsunami of evictions”. UCLA researchers have [estimated](#) that 495,000 households are at risk of eviction in Los Angeles county. In Silicon Valley, one of the [wealthiest regions in the world](#), 43,000 households are at high risk of eviction, and even if just 10% of them end up homeless, that could triple the region's unhoused population, one [recent report](#) estimated.

“We were in a crisis before. Now we are in a catastrophe,” said Trinidad Ruiz, an LA Tenants Union (LATU) organizer.

Some landlords, meanwhile, are not waiting for the disappearance of protections to try to remove their tenants with aggressive means.

The tenants under threat: ‘A frightening way to live’

The demands from Theresa Ribeiro's landlord in Castro Valley, a city in the San Francisco Bay area, in recent months have become increasingly hostile. Ribeiro said the owner of her house, Jon Souza, has required her to deposit part of her rent in the mail and another portion at the bank in person, a stipulation the 61-year-old said has been difficult to follow due to her work schedule and reduced bank hours during the pandemic.

When she has been slightly late, Souza has responded with a steady stream of profanity-laden voicemails, recordings show.

“Get my rent in the fucking checking account, I don’t care what the fucking issue is,” Souza said in one voicemail in June reviewed by the Guardian. “I don’t give a fuck if you’ve got to leave work.” In other voicemails, the incensed landlord told her she wasn’t behaving like a “mature woman” and said he was raising the rent by \$315. If she couldn’t afford it, he added, “you need to buy your own house”.

He also dismissed Covid rules, shouting in one message: “I’m going to evict you, I don’t give a shit about this virus thing ... These rules are not applying.”

Ribeiro has continued to pay full rent and said she is trying to move out but has struggled to find a place amid the pandemic: “Emotionally, I’m a mess. It’s frightening for me, and it’s a scary way to live.”

Reached by phone, Souza said he was threatening to evict Ribeiro because he was having financial difficulties. He acknowledged that she did not currently owe him rent, but said she previously had agreed to pay early on the 20th of each month and he became frustrated when she missed that date. He defended his voicemails, saying they had previously had a good relationship and he was “disappointed” in her: “The way I talked to Theresa was as an angry friend.”

Anne Tamiko Omura, director of the Eviction Defense Center, which is representing Ribeiro, said her organization was assisting many tenants facing eviction who have no income, nowhere else to go, and doctors advising them not to look for new apartments due to their Covid-19 risks: “People are calling all the time who have no money for food. Nannies, Uber drivers, restaurant workers, they are all out of work.”

Denise Briggs, 55, has been struggling to find a new home. Her landlord, Edward Zeltser, told her he was selling the home she rents in the city of Richmond, and that she had to move out. Briggs lost her job at a not-for-profit, has mobility issues and suffers from respiratory conditions that make her high risk for Covid. Landlords are asking tenants to pay first and last month’s rent upfront and a deposit, she said, costs she can’t afford. “I am completely stressed out,” she said.

Briggs said she shouldn’t have to fight to maintain her housing during a pandemic and that she wished there was more support for tenants: “People are down and they need help.”

Zeltser declined to comment.

New eviction methods: lockouts and electricity shutoffs

Beyond initial threats, some landlords have found more direct ways to try to force out tenants. Some have physically prevented tenants from entering, according to the LA Tenants Union, which has organized “eviction blockades” to defend tenants immediately threatened with losing their homes.

[Housing](#) lawyers said they have also seen an increase in landlords resorting to filing “restraining orders” against their tenants, using a process typically reserved for stalking and harassment cases. Other property owners have delivered paperwork to tenants that appear to be formal eviction lawsuits, when in reality the documents lack legitimate court summons. In at least one county, the sheriff’s department has directly carried out evictions and the local courts have allowed them, despite statewide orders.

Some landlords have made the rental units unlivable for renters who refuse to leave.

In south LA, Jessica Zabaleta, 41, said her landlord for months has been trying to force her and her 12-year-old son out of a converted garage. She filed a complaint with the city, which informed her landlord, Candelario Cejas, that it was unlawful to evict her due to Covid-19 protections. But soon after, according to Zabaleta, the landlord told her again in person that she needed to move out and then shut off her hot water.

On a recent afternoon, when she tried to take several activists and a reporter inside her home, several men showed up, confronted the group and physically blocked them from entering. Their relationship to the landlord was unclear, but Zabaleta said this was the kind of harassment she regularly faced.

“There is nowhere for us to go,” she said in Spanish, adding that the water was eventually turned back on. (Cejas did not respond to inquiries.)

Navigating the legal system can be daunting for renters, even if the violations are blatant, activists said.

Last month, Christopher Borunda, 33, was told he had seven days to vacate his East Hollywood apartment, even though he is covered by the Covid-19 tenant regulations and standard renter protections, his attorney said.

After he did not immediately move out, his electricity was shut off, the locks were changed, and his landlords began demolishing the kitchen and bathroom, making it uninhabitable, according to photos and his legal complaint. Borunda, who had been attending city college nearby and lost a number of freelancing jobs due to Covid, had to enter through a window to get back in and is now trying to rebuild the inside of the unit himself.

“They took my internet and now I can’t even apply for jobs,” said Borunda. “I’m just barely surviving and I’m out of options.”

Reached by phone, Steve Fleischmann, of My Management Co, which manages his building, said Borunda was a subtenant of one of his renters who moved out, and that he didn’t know he was still living there until he learned of his complaint. He said the previous tenant was responsible for the electricity, and that he would relocate Borunda while he continues renovating the property, though Borunda said he had not heard from him.

Can California ‘cancel rent’?

Activists say these harsh tactics are on the rise and they fear they will only become more common as more tenants fall into debt. In the meantime, advocates and experts are trying to wrap their heads around how to solve the collapse of an entire system when hundreds of thousands of people simply won’t be able to make payments.

State lawmakers are looking at one proposed California law, AB 1436, that would [prohibit evictions](#) until April 2021, or 90 days after the emergency ends, whichever happens first. The law would also allow tenants to repay debts through the state via their tax returns in subsequent years. It could also potentially allow the lowest-income tenants to apply for rent forgiveness.

The measure has drawn support from a coalition of “small neighborhood property owners” who spoke out last week about the importance of avoiding evictions.

Even if that measure is adopted, people with rent debts would continue to suffer, which would worsen income inequality in the state long-term, noted Marques Vestal, a South Central LATU organizer: “This is an entirely new financial class and condition we haven’t experienced in at least two generations.”

“The solutions provided by local municipalities and the governor don’t even come close to addressing the depth of the issue,” said Ruiz, the LATU organizer.

Tenant groups and some housing experts have rallied around the demand to “cancel rent”, arguing that erasing renters’ debts and ensuring they stay housed is the only reasonable way out of this crisis. As the government continues to [rescue industries](#) hurt by the pandemic, a [bailout for tenants](#) and small property owners is possible, supporters argue.

State officials have balked at that idea, dismissing it as unrealistic and not within the state’s powers.

Roy, the UCLA professor, said that although politicians have brushed aside rent cancelation demands, the severe wave of displacement could make it impossible for officials to ignore tenants: “Mass evictions have always led to mass mobilizations. This moment will lead to an extraordinary housing justice uprising.”

HEADLINE	07/30 Oregon State Police take over
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/91fe00b3e2f6a49a4d1b8e01d281aeeb
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Oregon police took over protecting a federal courthouse in Portland that’s been a target of violent protests as local authorities try to tamp down demonstrations that have wracked the city every night for more than two months following the killing of George Floyd.</p> <p>Having state and local officers step up their presence was part of a deal between the Democratic governor and the Trump administration that aimed to draw down the number of U.S. agents on hand during the unrest.</p> <p>Portland police cleared out a park Thursday morning across from the Mark O. Hatfield Federal Courthouse that demonstrators have used as a staging ground but reopened the park shortly before dark.</p> <p>By 10:30 p.m., hundreds of people had gathered and were listening to speeches in front of the Justice Center, a building that is one block over from the courthouse and houses city and county law enforcement offices. There was no sign of state troopers or local police and the crowd remained peaceful.</p> <p>Under the deal announced by Gov. Kate Brown, federal agents sent by President Donald Trump were to begin a phased withdrawal, with Oregon State Police taking over outside the building. But federal officials insist agents wouldn’t leave the city completely but be on standby in case they’re needed.</p> <p>Trump said in a tweet that U.S. officers would stay in Portland until the violence was under control.</p> <p>“If she can’t do it, the Federal Government will do it for her. We will not be leaving until there is safety!” Trump wrote about Brown, saying that she wasn’t doing enough to control the “anarchists & agitators.”</p> <p>Alicia Goss, who said she had been to 60 consecutive nights of protests, said late Thursday she was skeptical of the deal.</p> <p>“I don’t believe anything anymore,” she said. “I won’t believe it until I see it.”</p> <p>Jaleel Oneman waited for speeches to begin as the crowd grew earlier in the evening and said he didn’t expect much difference between the federal agents and state police who would be patrolling the protesters Thursday for the first time.</p> <p>“Stop hiding behind everything that you’re saying. Stop hiding behind your badges, stop hiding behind your lies, stop hiding behind the system that’s just been beating us up every day,” he said, referencing law enforcement. “There ain’t no difference to me. No, not at all.”</p> <p>In preparation for the handover, state troopers, the local sheriff and Portland police met and agreed not to use tear gas except in cases where there’s a danger of serious injury or death, Mayor Ted Wheeler said. Federal agents sent to the city in early July have used it nightly as protesters lob rocks, fireworks and other objects.</p> <p>Wheeler, who himself was gassed when he joined protesters outside the courthouse last week, added that tear gas “as a tactic really isn’t all that effective” because protesters have donned gas masks and often return to the action after recovering for a few minutes. The Democrat also apologized to peaceful demonstrators exposed to tear gas used by Portland police before federal officials arrived.</p> <p>Police Chief Chuck Lovell said he believes the new collaboration between local law enforcement agencies will be seen “as a victory in many ways.”</p>

“A lot of people came out to express their displeasure of folks from the federal government here and engaging in crowd control with members of our community,” Lovell said. “So I’m hoping that on many levels that people are happy in this development.”

Lovell said he is “very happy and very hopeful” with the collaboration between city and state police and Multnomah County Sheriff’s Department.

“We have trained and worked with Oregon State Police and crowd control events extensively, throughout the years,” Lovell said.

Portland has seen demonstrations since Floyd died in May after a white Minneapolis police officer pressed a knee into the Black man’s neck for nearly eight minutes.

Demonstrations have at times attracted up to 10,000 people for peaceful marches and rallies around the city. But some protesters have turned to violence that’s been increasingly directed at the courthouse and other federal property.

The Trump administration sent federal agents to guard the courthouse earlier this month and quell the unrest but the deployment had the opposite effect, reinvigorating protesters who found a new rallying point in opposing the federal presence.

The U.S. government had arrested 94 people as of Wednesday. During the past two months of protests, Lovell said the city police department has made more than 400 arrests and undertaken many different strategies in an attempt to deescalate the situation.

“It’s been a long two months,” he said.

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HEADLINE	07/30 Protesters vary as much as their arrests
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/ff1557d42bd09e8b6833f60bcbfea6e3
GIST	<p>Sheena McFerran was two rows behind a line of police at a protest in Portland, Oregon, when she saw officers pepper-spraying a Black man.</p> <p>“I said, ‘Hell no,’ so I pulled his backpack back really hard and stepped into the space he was in,” said McFerran, a 34-year-old manager for the Sierra Club who’s white.</p> <p>Edward Schinzing, 32, was just around the corner on another night. Prosecutors say he and 30 others broke into a building with a jail and courtrooms, destroyed an office and set it ablaze.</p> <p>Both were arrested. Their disparate circumstances highlight what The Associated Press found in an analysis of more than 200 arrests: even those accused of breaking the law during the liberal city’s nightly rallies don’t neatly fit into President Donald Trump’s depiction of protesters as “anarchists and agitators.”</p> <p>A review of court documents, social media posts and other public records from people arrested by federal and local authorities since mid-June reveals a group whose motives are as varied as the acts leading to their arrests.</p> <p>They’re Black Lives Matter activists who have been in the streets since George Floyd died at the hands of Minneapolis police in May, groups of self-proclaimed parents using leaf blowers to drive away tear gas and black-clad provocateurs taking advantage of the nightly chaos that’s gripped downtown Portland for over two months and led Trump to deploy federal agents in early July.</p>

The AP found that 95% of those arrested by police and federal agents were local. The vast majority have no criminal record in Oregon. Many appear to be college students. Their average age was 28, court records show.

They're mostly charged with misdemeanors like failing to comply with a lawful order, while some face felonies like arson and assault on an officer. Most people have been released, and some have been arrested more than once for similar offenses.

The federal government agreed Wednesday to draw down the number of agents whose presence has swelled the ranks of the protests. Federal forces have drawn more black-clad people accused of setting fires or assaulting officers but also military veterans seeking to lower tensions and a self-titled "Wall of Moms."

"They have acted as an occupying force & brought violence," Oregon Gov. Kate Brown tweeted of the U.S. officers.

Soon before the announcement, Trump insisted agents wouldn't leave until local authorities "secured their city." He's spent weeks running Portland through the political playbook he used during the initial wave of nationwide demonstrations after Floyd's death: painting those on the streets as anarchists and seeking to tie them to Democratic rival Joe Biden.

The U.S. Justice Department and Homeland Security officials have often highlighted destructive cases like Schinzing's in their portrayal of protesters. The nightly unrest often follows a script: authorities declare a riot, sending hundreds of peaceful protesters home as smaller groups of demonstrators target the U.S. courthouse with bricks, laser pointers and fireworks. Federal agents respond with tear gas, stun grenades and arrests.

But AP's analysis shows many of those arrested do not fit the caricature of an anarchist bent on destruction.

Moments before her arrest, police threw McFerran, the Sierra Club manager, to the ground, yanking off her mask and binding her wrists in zip ties. She was released after eight hours in jail and faces charges of disorderly conduct and interfering with police.

McFerran, who lives in Seattle, said she started protesting in her city and in Portland almost nightly after realizing she could do more in the fight for racial justice. Until Floyd's killing, McFerran says she was a "tourist protester."

"I realized I need to be participating in this legitimately every day," she said. "I need to do this work."

McFerran said she and her boyfriend, a former Army medic, provide security services and try to act as a "shield" between protesters of color and law enforcement.

Some of those charged with more serious offenses, such as assaulting officers and destroying property, have criminal histories. Most are white, according to court records.

Schinzing, who was photographed burning papers inside the county Justice Center, was ordered detained this week by a federal judge. He faces a felony arson charge, on top of unrelated harassment and assault charges from February, court records show. His court-appointed attorney declined to comment.

Acting Homeland Security Chief Chad Wolf said federal agents have made 94 arrests in Portland since July 4.

"Our federal officers have faced assaults with Molotov cocktails, mortar-style, commercial-grade fireworks, accelerants, IEDs and other violent weapons," Wolf said at a news conference about the withdrawal of federal agents.

Lisa Hay, Oregon's federal public defender, said her office is representing "mothers, college students, lawyers" and others from across the state and country.

"It should concern everyone that there were arrests by unmarked police officers of Oregonians who were asking what's going on and weren't being given any answers," Hay said.

The state sued over those allegations, which the Trump administration denies, but a judge found the state did not have standing to win an immediate court order restraining the federal agents.

Some Black activists say the political fight distracts from the focus on combating racist policing.

Mac Smiff, a 39-year-old father and analyst for a utility company, was arrested on June 6 and charged with interfering with a peace officer. He's confident the charge will be dismissed, saying he got caught up as police swept through downtown after a protest.

A veteran activist, Smiff took to the streets after seeing a prominent politician talking about reducing funding for police on TV. He thought the wave of rallies following Floyd's death seemed different, more focused, but said Trump deriding protesters as violent extremists is a familiar strategy.

"If you make the blame indiscriminate, then you can make the response indiscriminate. That's just a tactic to justify using escalating force and chemical weapons against us," Smiff said. "I own my house. I'm a professional human being. I'm out here fighting against corruption and police brutality. And the response is I'm a terrorist? That's laughable at best."

He welcomed the news that the federal presence in Portland would be winding down, saying the agents were a "distraction."

"That was a side mission," he said. "We came out here to defund the police."

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HEADLINE	07/30 Portland police find weapons in park
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/portland-police-uncover-sledgehammer-pipe-park-courthouse
GIST	<p>Several items that included a sledgehammer, pipe and a chain with a lock were found Thursday during the cleanup of downtown Portland, Ore., parks near where protests have raged for weeks, police officials said Thursday.</p> <p>The maintenance of Chapman and Lownsdale squares -- which sit adjacent to one another -- was conducted following a night of confrontation between authorities and protesters at the nearby Mark O. Hatfield U.S. Courthouse, the Portland Police Bureau said.</p> <p>Officers gave people inside 10 minutes to clear the area and no arrests were initially made at the time. Aside from the weapons, other items recovered at the parks included body armor, helmets, a shield and leaf blowers.</p> <p>"There were shocking amounts of refuse in the parks as well," a police news release said.</p> <p>Police officers providing security for the cleanup arrested two people. Kristina Naranja Rivera, 34, faces disorderly conduct and criminal mischief charges and 25-year-old Camillo Massagli faces charges of criminal mischief, trespassing and interfering with a peace officer.</p> <p>On Wednesday night, several hundred people gathered outside the courthouse. A group that remained until later in the night wore gas masks and were seen carrying signs, hockey sticks, lacrosse sticks, umbrellas, leaf blowers and fireworks, police said.</p>

	<p>At one point, the building was targeted with bottles, gas canisters and other objects. In addition to the protest Wednesday night, the city experienced multiple shootings and reports of people being assaulted nearby by a group with a pellet gun.</p> <p>Two minors were taken into custody on suspicion for the assaults.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 NHC warns: prepare for Hurricane Isaias
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/isaias-becomes-hurricane-as-it-bears-down-on-the-bahamas
GIST	<p>The National Hurricane Center declared Isaias a hurricane late Thursday night as it nears the Bahamas after the storm knocked out electricity and drenched Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic earlier in the day.</p> <p>By late Thursday, Isaias had maximum sustained winds of 80 mph, making it a Category 1 hurricane.</p> <p>“There is a risk of impacts from winds, heavy rainfall, and storm surge along portions of the U.S. East Coast beginning this weekend in Florida and spreading northward to the Carolinas and southern mid-Atlantic states early next week,” an advisory from the center said.</p> <p>The center said on Twitter that data from the Air Force Hurricane Hunters indicates that the storm is stronger than before, but its track forecast “is unchanged.</p> <p>Isaias was centered about 70 miles east-southeast of Great Inagua Island in the southeastern Bahamas late Thursday, the U.S. National Hurricane Center said.</p> <p>Isaias was moving northwest at 18 mph, and its center was forecast to move near the southeastern Bahamas during the night, be near the central Bahamas late Friday and move near or over the northwest Bahamas and near South Florida on Saturday.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 Nevada firefighting planes collide midair
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/nevada-firefighting-planes-collide-midair-both-pilots-dead-authorities-say
GIST	<p>Two single-engine planes collided in midair Thursday afternoon during firefighting activities in southeastern Nevada, according to reports.</p> <p>Both pilots were killed in the crash and a recovery effort was underway, FOX 5 of Las Vegas reported.</p> <p>"We offer our sincere condolences to the families of the two pilots and to all those working with the BLM Nevada Ely District," BLM Nevada State Director Jon Raby told the station.</p> <p>"BLM" refers to the state Bureau of Land Management.</p> <p>A Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) spokeswoman told Fox News the accident occurred while the planes were fighting the Bishop Fire near Caliente, Nev., around 1 p.m.</p> <p>The FAA and the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) will lead the investigation, and the NTSB will determine the probable cause of the crash.</p> <p>Investigators have yet to verify the aircraft tail numbers at the crash site.</p>

	<p>Each plane had only the pilot aboard, authorities said.</p> <p>Tanker planes can carry as much as 800 gallons of fire retardant and can provide service to areas that are unreachable for large tankers, FOX 5 reported.</p> <p>The 500-acre wildfire started Wednesday in an area about 17 miles southwest of Caliente and 150 miles northeast of Las Vegas.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 Wisconsin statewide mask mandate
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/wisconsin-governor-orders-masks-statewide-amid-virus-surge-72083164
GIST	<p>MADISON, Wis. -- Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers on Thursday issued a statewide mask mandate amid a spike in coronavirus cases, setting up a conflict with Republican legislative leaders who oppose such a requirement and successfully sued to kill the governor's "safer at home" order.</p> <p>Evers, a Democrat, declared a new public health emergency and ordered the wearing of masks for anyone age 5 and up starting on Saturday for all enclosed spaces except a person's home. The new order also applies to outdoor bars and restaurants, except when people are eating or drinking.</p> <p>Anyone who violates the order would be subject to a \$200 fine. It is scheduled to run until Sept. 28.</p> <p>"This virus doesn't care about any town, city, or county boundary, and we need a statewide approach to get Wisconsin back on track," Evers said in a statement, citing the recent rise in cases across the state. "We've said all along that we're going to let science and public health experts be our guide in responding to this pandemic, and we know that masks and face coverings will save lives."</p> <p>The conservative-controlled Wisconsin Supreme Court in May tossed out an order from Evers' health secretary closing most nonessential businesses in an attempt to slow the spread of the virus. Republican state Sen. Steve Nass, one of the Legislature's most conservative members, called for lawmakers to meet in an emergency session to kill the order, which he called "illegal and unnecessary."</p> <p>Republican Assembly Speaker Robin Vos said he opposes a statewide mandate, but he indicated that he wouldn't sue to stop it like he did the "safer at home" order.</p> <p>"There are certainly constitutional questions here," Vos said. "I would expect legal challenges from citizen groups."</p> <p>Vos did not say whether the Legislature would reconvene to kill the order.</p> <p>Evers has repeatedly cited the earlier Supreme Court ruling as a reason for his reluctance to join 32 other states that have mask mandates. However, the May ruling determined that the state health secretary overstepped her authority with the "safer at home" order; the court did not address the governor's power to issue public health emergencies.</p> <p>The state's high court was controlled 5-2 by conservatives when it struck down the earlier order on a split 4-3 decision. But on Saturday, when the mask order takes effect, Justice-elect Jill Karofsky will join the court, narrowing the conservative majority to 4-3 and increasing the odds of the order surviving a legal challenge.</p> <p>Evers said the rise in COVID-19 cases, not Karofsky's joining the court, and the fact that not enough people wore masks voluntarily motivated him to act now. Evers had been under pressure from local governments, and even some Democrats, to issue a statewide order. Democratic state Sen. Chris Larson, of Milwaukee, started a petition for a statewide mandate.</p>

	<p>“The bottom line is we need to keep people safe and this is one way to do it,” he said. “We hope the Supreme Court agrees with us. You never know, it may never end up in the Supreme Court.”</p> <p>Absent a statewide mask order, cities and counties across the state have been taking action on their own. Milwaukee and Dane counties, with Wisconsin’s largest cities of Milwaukee and Madison, were the first to make masks mandatory. Numerous other cities, including Green Bay, Racine, Superior and Whitewater, have followed suit. Appleton this week recommended that people wear masks, but did not require it.</p> <p>Evers’ order doesn’t preempt local governments from enacting even stricter ordinances.</p> <p>Wisconsin has had more than 52,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 919 deaths from the disease since the pandemic started. That death count is the 28th-highest in the country and the 35th highest per capita, at nearly 16 deaths per 100,000 people. Over the past two weeks, the rolling average number of daily new cases has gone up by 90, an increase of more than 11%.</p> <p>The virus, although still heavily concentrated in urban areas, is spreading to more rural counties that had largely avoided the disease.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 Florida faces record high deaths
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/florida-faces-pressure-sees-record-high-virus-deaths-72080081
GIST	<p>MIAMI -- Florida tallied on Thursday a new record high in daily confirmed COVID-19 deaths for the third straight day as the state faces pressure to outline new measures to combat the pandemic.</p> <p>The Florida Department of Health said 253 more deaths were reported raising the state's total death toll to 6,586.</p> <p>The new deaths bring the average reported deaths per day to 154 for the past week, second only to Texas in the resurgence of the outbreak. Florida’s current rate of deaths is about one-fifth of those logged in New York at the height of its outbreak in mid-April.</p> <p>The head of a congressional coronavirus oversight panel sent letters to Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and three other Republican governors Wednesday requesting documents to show how their states are fighting the pandemic.</p> <p>According to the letter, Florida is not following three recommendations outlined in a White House coronavirus task force report by allowing gyms to remain open even in worst-hit Miami and Tampa, permitting a larger capacity for indoor dining and not limiting social gatherings. The report hasn't been made public.</p> <p>The request by South Carolina Rep. James Clyburn, a Democrat, comes days after White House coronavirus task force leader Dr. Deborah Birx implored leaders to close bars and for residents to wear masks.</p> <p>The letter also says Florida is only partially complying to other guidelines by not mandating masks in all counties with rising test positivity, singling out Polk County as one that is currently not requiring the use of facial coverings. DeSantis has refused to issue a statewide mask mandate.</p> <p>On Thursday, DeSantis spoke to reporters after watching the launch of the Mars rover in Merritt Island and was asked about large crowds gathering to watch the liftoff, many of whom were not wearing masks.</p>

“Our guidelines have been that physical distancing is important, closed sustained contact is what is the best mechanism for transmitting the virus,” DeSantis said before lifting up a mask. “If you can’t maintain the physical distance, wearing the mask, this may be able to stop some of the droplets. It doesn’t stop them all.”

Another recommendation the state may be only partially follow, according to the letter by the chairman of the House Oversight and Reform subcommittee, is Florida’s order to close bars in late June. The measure allows restaurants that make more money selling food to operate bar-top seating, and it has drawn crowds to establishments such as sports bars.

Counties such as worst-hit Miami-Dade have implemented curfews to discourage social gatherings in such establishments. Neighboring Broward County, home to Fort Lauderdale, has also ordered a curfew. And in the Florida Keys, two residents were jailed for failing to quarantine after testing positive for the new coronavirus.

Florida’s efforts to keep the outbreak under control have been complicated by Tropical Storm Isaias, projected to head north along the state’s east coast over the weekend. Emergency officials announced they will close state-run COVID-19 testing sites late Thursday and through the weekend as a precaution.

The number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Florida reported each day remains high, at 9,956, with a cumulative tally of infections now surpassing 460,000.

But the number of patients treated for COVID-19 in Florida hospitals continued to decline Thursday, with 8,425 logged in the state’s online census in the late morning — down about 300 from the previous day and down more than 1,000 from peak levels last week.

Even with hospitalization trends improving, schools in South Florida and the Florida Keys have already announced they would start their school year fully online in late August.

DeSantis continued to advocate for schools to teach in person this fall, saying children will be affected with the online models.

“With this distance learning, how many kids will just totally fall off the map after doing this for months, and months and months? Remember, we started this with 15 days to slow the spread,” DeSantis said Thursday. “It was never supposed to be just keep society in the fetal position indefinitely.”

Officials have avoided reinstating widespread closures and safer-at-home orders, but the economy continues to be affected.

The toll on Florida’s theme park industry was reflected Thursday in second quarter earnings from Comcast, which owns Universal Orlando. The company’s theme parks division shrank to \$87 million in revenue from \$1.46 billion a year ago.

But the reopening of Disney World, one of the state’s largest employers with a 77,000-person workforce, probably helped bring down the number of jobless claims in Florida. About 87,000 people applied last week compared with almost 109,000 claims the previous week.

However, less than half of the 43,000 unionized workers at the resort were called back to work when the theme parks reopened earlier this month after closing in March.

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HEADLINE 07/30 Virus surge hits plateau; few celebrate

SOURCE <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/2nd-us-virus-surge-hits-plateau-experts-celebrate-72078266>

GIST	<p>NEW YORK -- While deaths from the coronavirus in the U.S. are mounting rapidly, public health experts are seeing a flicker of good news: The second surge of confirmed cases appears to be leveling off.</p> <p>Scientists aren't celebrating by any means, warning that the trend is driven by four big, hard-hit places — Arizona, California, Florida and Texas — and that cases are rising in close to 30 states in all, with the outbreak's center of gravity seemingly shifting from the Sun Belt toward the Midwest.</p> <p>Some experts wonder whether the apparent caseload improvements will endure. It's also not clear when deaths will start coming down. COVID-19 deaths do not move in perfect lockstep with the infection curve, for the simple reason that it can take weeks to get sick and die from the virus.</p> <p>The future? "I think it's very difficult to predict," said Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's foremost infectious-disease expert.</p> <p>The virus has claimed over 150,000 lives in the U.S., by far the highest death toll in the world, plus more than a half-million others around the globe.</p> <p>Over the past week, the average number of COVID-19 deaths per day in the U.S. has climbed more than 25%, from 843 to 1,057. Florida on Thursday reported 253 more deaths, setting its third straight single-day record, while Texas had 322 new fatalities and California had 391.</p> <p>The number of confirmed infections nationwide has topped 4.4 million, which could be higher because of limits on testing and because some people are infected without feeling sick.</p> <p>Return to Top</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 China celebrates; navigation system online
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/china-celebrates-completion-rival-sat-navigation-system-72097020
GIST	<p>BEIJING -- China is celebrating the completion of its BeiDou Navigation Satellite System that could rival the U.S. Global Positioning System and significantly boost China's security and geopolitical clout.</p> <p>President Xi Jinping, the leader of the ruling Communist Party and the People's Liberation Army, officially commissioned the system Friday at a ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.</p> <p>That followed a declaration that the 55th and final geostationary satellite in the constellation launched June 23 was operating after having completed all tests.</p> <p>The satellite is part of the third iteration of the Beidou system known as BDS-3, which began providing navigation services in 2018 to countries taking part in China's sprawling "Belt and Road" infrastructure initiative along with others.</p> <p>As well as being a navigation aid with an extremely high degree of accuracy, the system offers short message communication of up to 1,200 Chinese characters and the ability to transmit images.</p> <p>While China says it seeks cooperation with other satellite navigation systems, Beidou could ultimately compete against GPS, Russia's GLONASS and the European Union's Galileo networks. That's similar to how Chinese mobile phone makers and other producers of technically sophisticated hardware have taken on their foreign rivals.</p> <p>Among the chief advantages for China is the ability to replace GPS for guiding its missiles, especially important now amid rising tensions with Washington.</p>

	<p>It also stands to raise China's economic and political leverage over nations adopting the system, ensuring that they line up behind China's position on Taiwan, Tibet the South China Sea and other sensitive matters or risk losing their access.</p> <p>China's space program has advanced rapidly since becoming only the third country to fly a crewed mission in 2003 and the country this month launched an orbiter, lander and rover to Mars. If successful, it would make China the only other country besides the U.S. to land on Mars.</p> <p>China has also constructed an experimental space station and sent a pair of rovers to the surface of the moon. Future plans call for a fully functioning permanent space station and a possible crewed flight to the moon.</p> <p>The program has suffered some setbacks, including launch failures, and has had limited cooperation with other countries' space efforts, in part because of U.S. objections to its close connections to the Chinese military.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 France sinks deeper worsening recession
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/france-sinks-deeper-recession-14-gdp-hit-2q-72097088
GIST	<p>PARIS -- France's economy shrank by nearly 14% in the second quarter when the country was in coronavirus lockdown, a third consecutive quarter of negative growth in a worsening recession, the national statistics agency said Friday.</p> <p>The startling plunge of 13.8% from April-June starkly illustrated the punishing economic cost of the two-month lockdown. The pain was so damaging to jobs and industries that the government is talking down the possibility of another nationwide lockdown as infections tick upward again.</p> <p>France's economy was already slowing, shrinking by 0.2% in the last quarter of 2019, before the pandemic hit with full force.</p> <p>French GDP shrank by 5.9% in the first quarter of 2020 as COVID-19 patients started to flood and overwhelm hospitals.</p> <p>That health crisis, with COVID-19 killing more than 30,000 people in France, prompted the government in March to introduce what was one of Europe's strictest lockdowns, halting much activity in the second-largest economy of the countries that use the euro currency.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 Safety concerns: reopening Fla. schools
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/safety-concerns-parents-teachers-returning-school-covid-19/story?id=72057108
GIST	<p>As Florida cases of the coronavirus continue to rise, Pensacola mom Latoya Floyd says she doesn't want to risk her children's health by sending them back to school next month but that she doesn't have a choice, either.</p> <p>The single parent of two elementary school kids, one of whom has asthma, works at a Publix where she has been an associate throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. While there, her kids stay at a daycare that she says is poised to become overwhelmed with children, making it difficult for them to learn adequately and maintain social distance, she says. She says she works too many hours to ensure her kids are getting a proper education on her own.</p>

"I absolutely have no choice but to send them to school because I work 45 hours a week, so it would be extremely hard to try to juggle making sure that their curriculum is on task," Floyd told "Nightline," adding that her kids get too distracted learning from home. "I feel like they should have an environment that they can sit and learn, and know that when they're in this environment, it's all about education, it's all about school."

Over the weekend, Florida surpassed New York, the former U.S. epicenter of the virus, to become the state with the second most COVID-19 cases. There were record numbers of hospitalizations and deaths last week, as its rate of positive cases has begun to trend downward.

As Florida began seeing a surge in cases in early July, Gov. Ron DeSantis signed an executive order requiring schools to open for traditional in-person learning. In response to the order, some educators in Florida have sued the governor, Florida Department of Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran and Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Gimenez, asking for an injunction to stop state officials from taking action if schools don't reopen for in-person learning, arguing that it violates the Florida constitution to open schools if it is unsafe.

"I would rather actually keep them home than to send them back right now because the virus is still yet rising," Floyd said. "Nothing has really happened to decrease people being sick and there hasn't really been a cure for COVID-19. So if my children contract COVID-19 then it's all a waiting game on if they will get better, and with my son having asthma, that just puts a little bit more on him and his conditions."

Floyd is not alone. An [ABC News/Ipsos poll](#) released Friday found 55% of American parents were against schools reopening for in-person instruction in the fall. Only 44% of parents said they'd be willing to send their kids back to school in the fall despite 59% of them saying they were concerned their children were falling behind in school because of the pandemic.

Floyd said her children, 10-year-old Tyler Floyd and 6-year-old Skylar Woods, are supposed to begin fifth-grade and first-grade classes at Ferry Pass Elementary School in Pensacola next month. The school, which is part of the School District of Escambia County, had given parents three choices for their kids 2020-2021 education: remote learning, virtual school and traditional.

The school had previously been scheduled to start classes on Aug. 10, but its start date was postponed to Aug. 24 [last week](#) after the school district's superintendent Malcolm Thomas said twice the expected number of parents chose remote learning and virtual school over traditional.

"The number of students participating in the Remote Learning/Virtual School option means additional training for a number of our current instructors," Thomas said in a [statement](#) on the school's website. "Pushing the student start date ... is necessary to provide our educators with the professional development required for quality virtual instruction. This also means students returning to Traditional School can improve social distancing within the classroom and school buses."

Still, educators within the Escambia school district expressed concerns about the safety precautions their schools will have when they reopen. Math teacher Willie Craig is also the director of Camp Magnolia Summer Day Camp in Milton, Florida. When the pandemic began in the U.S. in March, he made the decision to shut down the program, saying the risk of "kids being sick and just spreading that among the other kids was too high."

His sister, a music teacher and pastor, died from COVID-19 after being on a ventilator for 19 days. He says he's concerned reopening in an area of high transmission will place teachers and students at risk of exposure. As a member of the Pensacola Citywide Choir, Craig said at least four other members are in the hospital fighting COVID-19.

"I really want to be there and see the students," Craig told "Nightline." "I have a passion for the kids. I absolutely love my kids. However ... life is just too precious and we can't get this wrong. ... Safety has to be first before anything else."

Carol Cleaver, a science teacher in the Escambia school district, says that while she wants schools to reopen, she thinks “we need to be realistic about in what fashion is the safest way.”

“I certainly have elderly people in my family that I’m concerned about. There are other people in my family that have immuno-compromised issues,” she told “Nightline.” “And so, I’m terrified that I might bring something back to their household. A lot of my students are being raised by their grandparents ... and it’s just not realistically a safe situation for anyone.”

Cleaver had also been part of a task force charged with creating a reopening plan for the Florida Education Association teachers union. She says the group presented their plan to DeSantis and Corcoran in early June.

“I’m disappointed that the governor has issued a unilateral order... I really think that, especially in light of the rising numbers in Florida, we need a little more leadership. I feel like that the governor has put superintendents in a very difficult position -- that he’s kind of making them make the tough decision of closing schools when I think it should be a statewide decision. I think we need leadership at the state level and we’re not getting that.”

Cleaver said the Escambia school district had “pre-purchased 400,000 paper masks” and “installed hand sanitizing stations,” but said she was worried the schools would run out of paper towels and soap, which typically “ran out early in the day.”

“We are not certain that we will be given anything else to help us keep our classrooms clean, like paper towels or ... disinfectant” Cleaver said, adding that family members have been collecting these items so they’d be available.

As part of the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s](#) (CDC) guidelines for reopening K-12 schools, the agency says it’s critical that school administrators implement multiple COVID-19 mitigation strategies, including using cloth face coverings and social distancing, maintaining a healthy environment through frequent cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and making decisions that take into account the level of community transmission of COVID-19.

The School District of Escambia Superintendent Malcom Thomas did not respond to a request for comment on the school’s masks requirements or other steps it would be taking to ensure safety in schools.

However, the school district’s [website](#) says that “face coverings will be worn in district facilities as directed by staff and instructional leaders. If a situation arises whereas a student, member of staff, or a visitor is not wearing, or is incapable of wearing a face covering, such individual may be assisted or guided by appropriate authorities within the district to undertake alternative, reasonable and accommodating actions to protect self and others.”

The site also says “no one is expected to wear face coverings for six to seven hours at a time,” and that it’s particularly important to comply on school buses, in hallways and in shared spaces. Students will also be socially distancing “to the extent possible,” according to the website. Maintenance staff and custodians will also clean “frequently touched surfaces throughout the day and conduct overall cleanings at the conclusion of every day.” Non-custodial staff will be given spray bottles and microfiber cloths for additional cleaning, and “teachers will have access to cleaning supplies for their classrooms.” The schools are also changing their air conditioning filters and giving temperature checks to students and staff “as appropriate.”

In Clay County, Florida, kindergarten teacher Megan Carrigan has been teaching 18 students in an in-person summer school program at Charles E. Bennett Elementary School in Green Cove Springs, Florida, since July 8th.

"We take risk in all that we do each day. But given the circumstances that I've already gone through, I feel like I need to do the best that I can to live my life the fullest," she said. "And as long as I know that I am taking all the precautions that I need to take. Then I'm going to be OK."

Carrigan is a cancer survivor and diabetic who says she's aware of the risks she's taking every time she walks into the classroom.

"My family had to take extra measures to help keep my immune system strong. ... We would naturally come in and sanitize our hands, change clothes, take showers -- things like that," she said. "And so, with COVID, we're doing the exact same thing."

She says that experience helped her with implementing new rules and procedures within her classroom.

"I actually have written it into our schedule ... when they come in, we hand sanitize. We start our morning work. Then, we do bathroom break with hand washing, and then we do an activity and then we do bathroom break and hand washing," she says. "So, we just built into the schedule more hand washing and sanitizing. And then, when they line up to go anywhere -- the student center for lunch or dismissal -- we've taught them to line up with social distancing."

For these tough decisions parents and teachers across the U.S. will soon need to make, Carrigan says "to each their own."

"As a teacher, as a person, as a parent, you need to do what's best for you and your family," she said. "And if you do not feel like it's a place that you need to be at that time, then you need to stand true to what you feel. ... For me, personally, being in the classroom is where I want to be and where I feel safe going."

Dr. Jason Wilson, an emergency physician at Tampa General Hospital in Tampa, Florida, says it was difficult deciding whether he'd send his son to school, but that he ultimately decided he would.

"If this is so hard for me, how can any other parent make this decision right now," he said. "I don't even understand that, when the world is shifting so much, when our cases are as high as they are."

Wilson says that after weighing the risks, he decided enrolling his son was the best option for his family. However, he's hoping his son's school district will consider delaying the reopening date until COVID-19 hospitalization rates go down.

"We're having to make decisions about science and about policy and about our own children based on this serious virus that we know very little about. It takes time to make these things and bring these things out. And we really haven't gotten it yet."

Like many parents, Wilson is still struggling with his decision.

"I don't feel completely safe in this decision I have made. I felt it was the best decision and that gave me the most options at the time that I signed the letter. But I don't see how anyone can feel perfectly safe in this current place where I am right now in Tampa," he said. "It's a risk calculation and I'm not sure where the risk is going to sit three weeks from now, or a month."

When compared to the speed at which schools had to transition to remote learning at the beginning of the pandemic, Craig says reopening the schools can be different.

"If we take time now and plan correctly, then we can make huge strides as far as education is concerned. But if we don't ... and we go back into brick and mortar [schools] and there is going to have to be quarantines here and quarantines there -- we don't do this effectively -- then learning would be limited."

	<p>It may already be too late. Like many other parents, Floyd is concerned her kids have fallen behind during the pandemic. She said “there’s a lot of pressure” right now to ensure her daughter is prepared for first grade and that her daughter is in a structured setting to “ensure she is grasping” the curriculum.</p> <p>“They took children out of school like mid semester ... and that slowed things down tremendously. Me, having a kindergartner, we were still in a really tight learning spot because [of] having to make sure she knows her sight words,” Floyd said. “There’s a lot of pressure before going into the first grade because you have to know these words to be able to read in the first grade.”</p> <p>Floyd said her children’s education is “super important” to her because it’ll equip them to be self-sustaining, confident adults. Having spent several months making sure their school work gets done after day care and working full-time, she said she has a “newfound respect” for educators.</p> <p>“I love them,” she said. “I wish them the best and I hope things are really, really normal again.”</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 No charges: officer killed Michael Brown
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/st-louis-county-prosecutor-charging-ferguson-officer-killed/story?id=72089915
GIST	<p>The former police officer who fatally shot Michael Brown six years ago in Ferguson, Missouri, will not be criminally charged, the St. Louis County prosecutor said Thursday.</p> <p>"This is one of the most difficult things I have had to do as an elected official," Wesley Bell said at a press conference announcing the findings of an independent, five-month review.</p> <p>After examining thousands of pages of witness statements, forensic reports and other evidence, Bell said his office was unable to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Darren Wilson committed murder or manslaughter under Missouri law when he shot and killed Brown.</p> <p>Bell, who was elected St. Louis County's first Black prosecutor in 2018, said the investigation does not exonerate Wilson.</p> <p>"The question of whether we can prove a case at trial is different than clearing him of any and all wrongdoing," Bell said. "There's so many points at which Darren Wilson could have handled the case differently, and if he had, Michael Brown might still be alive. But that is not the question before us. The only question is whether we can prove beyond a reasonable doubt that a crime occurred, and the answer to that is no."</p> <p>Brown, a Black teenager, was unarmed when Wilson, a white police officer, shot and killed him on Aug. 9, 2014. The incident sparked national protests over police brutality and marked the beginning of the Black Lives Matter movement.</p> <p>Bell's predecessor, Bob McCulloch, turned the case over to a grand jury which declined to indict Wilson in November 2014. Wilson also resigned that month.</p> <p>The U.S. Justice Department declined to prosecute the former officer in March 2015, citing evidence and witnesses supporting Wilson’s claims that Brown attacked him.</p> <p>Brown's family was paid \$1.5 million in a 2017 settlement after they sued the city of Ferguson.</p> <p>Brown's name has been among those invoked in the recent nationwide protests against police brutality following the death of George Floyd in May while in the custody of Minneapolis police.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 Covid outbreak picks up in Midwest
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-usa/u-s-covid-19-outbreak-picks-up-in-midwest-as-summer-travel-spreads-virus-idUSKCN24V2D8
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON/NEW YORK (Reuters) - Coronavirus infections appear to be picking up in the U.S. Midwest, the coordinator of the White House Coronavirus Task Force said on Thursday, as Ohio reported a record day of cases and Wisconsin's governor mandated the use of masks.</p> <p>The coronavirus outbreak is "moving up" into Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, Kansas and Nebraska from the south "because of vacations and other reasons of travel," Deborah Birx told Fox News.</p> <p>Ohio's health department said the state had its highest single-day increase in cases since the pandemic started in January, which Governor Mike DeWine told a news conference was "certainly not good news."</p> <p>A few states away in Wisconsin, Tony Evers joined dozens of other governors who have ordered residents to wear face coverings in public. Masks are recommended by health experts, but some conservatives say such orders violate the U.S. Constitution.</p> <p>"While I know emotions are high when it comes to wearing face coverings in public, my job as governor is to put people first and to do what's best for the people of our state, so that's what I am going to do," Evers, a Democrat, said in a statement.</p> <p>The United States remains the country most affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, surpassing a death toll of 150,000 on Wednesday.</p> <p>Florida reported a record increase in new COVID-19 deaths for a third consecutive day on Thursday, according to the state health department, while Arizona also reported a record increase in fatalities.</p> <p>The two states had been hotspots with major outbreaks, but new cases have recently slowed in both, according to a Reuters tally.</p> <p>According to the temporary healthcare staffing platform NurseFly, demand for nurses in Arizona increased 75% in July over June.</p> <p>"I'm trying to just maintain a healthy level of anxiety," said Rachel Norton, a traveling intensive care unit nurse who was leaving Denver on Thursday for a one-month contract in Mesa, Arizona.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 DHS seized \$2B from travelers; crime?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/trafficandcommuting/homeland-security-seized-2-billion-from-travelers-but-most-were-never-charged-with-a-crime-report-says/2020/07/30/001c3f90-cd05-11ea-bc6a-6841b28d9093_story.html?hpid=hp_national1-8-12_forfeiture-1030am%3Ahomepage%2Fstory-ans
GIST	<p>Anthonia Nwaorie headed to a Houston airport with more than \$41,000 in her bags in 2017, planning to use the cash to build a free medical clinic for women and girls in her native Nigeria, according to a lawsuit.</p> <p>But the registered nurse was stopped on the boarding bridge by agents from Customs and Border Protection, who claimed she failed to report taking more than \$10,000 out of the country as required by federal law.</p> <p>Nwaorie's currency was seized and though she was never charged with a crime, it took months and a legal battle before CBP returned the money without conditions. Such seizures are hardly unique.</p>

More than \$2 billion was taken from travelers at the nation's airports by the CBP and other agencies now associated with the Department of Homeland Security between 2000 and 2016, according to a first-of-its-kind analysis of a government database of every seizure.

Federal law allows CBP and other agencies to take cash from travelers as a way to combat drug trafficking and other criminal enterprises, but the [new report by the Institute for Justice](#) found nearly 70 percent of such cases are like Nwaorie's — no arrest accompanies a seizure.

Critics argue federal agencies are abusing civil forfeiture to fatten budgets, since the cash flows into government coffers and is redistributed. The report found DHS airport seizures have exploded over the decade-and-a-half studied, climbing 178 percent. In all, DHS agencies made more than 30,500 cash seizures during the period.

Dulles International Airport led the nation in DHS seizures during 2016, the latest year for which data was available. About \$41 million was taken from travelers, or nearly a quarter of the amount seized nationwide, according to the report. Dulles only accounts for 2 percent of the nation's air travelers.

Other major hub airports also saw large numbers of seizures in recent years, including Chicago's O'Hare International Airport, New York City's John F. Kennedy International Airport, Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport and Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport. The report says the findings suggest DHS agents at certain airports may be particularly aggressive.

"When you consider that these agencies have the ability to seize different types of property wherever they operate, the scope of the entire program is just so large," said Jennifer McDonald, senior research analyst at IJ and the author of the report. "The reason we focused on cash seizures at airports is because we've heard they are some of the most abusive."

Nwaorie recalled how she was searched and at one point, handcuffed.

"That was a very big nightmare," Nwaorie said. "You think you would wake up and it would go away, but it didn't go away."

DHS officials referred questions to the CBP. A CBP spokesman defended civil forfeiture in a statement after reviewing the IJ report, saying the requirements to declare currency are clearly displayed in CBP facilities and on the agency's website.

"The most common reason for currency seizures is a failure to comply with reporting requirements, which is a violation of federal law," the statement read. "However, currency seized by CBP at ports of entry has also been connected with bulk cash smuggling, counterfeiting, narcotics trafficking, and other criminal offenses. An individual may petition for the return of seized currency, but the petitioner must prove that the source and intended use of the currency was legitimate."

The report found half of the DHS airport seizures were from travelers who allegedly failed to report they were traveling internationally with more than \$10,000 in cash. Other common claims for seizing cash was that it was involved in drug trafficking, smuggling goods or there was some violation of local or state law, according to the report.

IJ became one of the first nongovernment entities to obtain the forfeiture database maintained by the Treasury Department after roughly four years of legal action and negotiations following a freedom of information request in 2015. IJ is a libertarian public interest law firm based in Virginia. The Washington Post is the first to report on the findings.

Nwaorie's ordeal began in October 2017. Nwaorie, 62, said she was unaware of the law requiring her to declare her cash, before she arrived at the George Bush Intercontinental Airport.

She said she had spent years saving the money to open the clinic and had tucked it into envelopes in her purse and carry-on bag. But on the boarding bridge, CBP agents asked her how many people she was carrying money for and another question that stung: “How long have you been in the United States?”

Nwaorie had been a U.S. citizen since 1994. She said she was led to a room where she was questioned, before the agents seized all \$41,377. She was then let go, but didn’t have money to continue her trip immediately.

In the months that followed, CBP sent her a forfeiture letter and Nwaorie requested the case be transferred to a U.S. attorney’s office for judicial forfeiture proceedings, according to court documents.

In April 2018, the CBP sent another letter saying the U.S. attorney’s office declined to pursue forfeiture proceedings and it was returning Nwaorie’s money, court documents show.

But there was a catch: CBP wanted Nwaorie to sign an agreement saying she would not sue. If Nwaorie did not respond in 30 days, CBP would initiate its own forfeiture proceedings, according to court documents.

Nwaorie refused to sign and decided to sue CBP in federal court in Texas. The same day the agency relented and started the process of refunding her money, according to court documents. She was sent a check in May 2018.

Critics argue the system is stacked against people such as Nwaorie. Subjects must affirmatively challenge the seizure within a window of time if they hope to get their money back, and most cases are decided by an attorney with the seizing agency, rather than a judge.

Civil forfeiture is not limited to DHS agencies. Other local, state and federal agencies engage in it as well, and the practice has come under increasing scrutiny.

A 2017 Department of Justice [Inspector General report](#) found the Drug Enforcement Administration had seized over \$28 billion worth of assets over a 10-year period, but found only 44 of 100 seizures it studied were related to an ongoing investigation or resulted in a new investigation, arrest or prosecution.

Earlier in the year, a Pennsylvania man and his daughter sued the DEA and the Transportation Security Administration in a federal class-action lawsuit after DEA agents seized the man’s life savings at an airport. The money was eventually returned, but the lawsuit is ongoing.

The Supreme Court [limited the power](#) of state and local agencies to seize property in an important ruling in 2019. At the end of June, a group of senators introduced legislation known as the FAIR Act that would increase the burden of proof before assets could be seized among other changes to strengthen protections.

For her part, Nwaorie was able to resume her work. The medical clinic is under construction, although it was delayed by over a year.

“It’s been something that I prayed and thought about for many years,” Nwaorie said. “I grew up in the town where I’m doing the clinic. Women die in childbirth. It’s a situation that shouldn’t happen.”

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HEADLINE	07/30 Small Pacific islands center of power play
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/china-taiwan-dispute-and-coronavirus-aid-fuel-hostilities-in-solomon-islands/2020/07/29/500a7fd8-cccb-11ea-99b0-8426e26d203b_story.html?hpid=hp_world-right-4-0_world-latest-feed-magic1%3Ahomepage%2Fstory-ans

Thousands of miles from their Taiwan Strait flash point, Beijing and Taipei are squaring off in another cross-strait dispute where old animosities collide with local grievances and coronavirus realpolitik.

Days before Solomon Islands [switched diplomatic allegiance](#) from Taiwan to China last year, Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare declared his erstwhile partner “[completely useless to us](#)” as he went on to embrace Beijing in a process marred by corruption allegations. Taiwan responded by severing ties with the government of the South Pacific archipelago.

Now, fallout from the spat is inflaming tensions in the Solomons, which lie in a politically unstable region where China is expanding its sway. It’s also revealing how, facing a dwindling list of diplomatic partners, Taiwan is seeking new avenues of influence by engaging with subnational governments — but in doing so, is injecting one of the world’s thorniest geopolitical tussles into far-flung and often volatile local affairs.

While their trade with China far outstripped that with Taiwan, many in the Solomons were not happy about abandoning 36 years of friendship. The decision especially chafed with inhabitants of Malaita, the Solomons’ most populous region, which sits 60 miles across the Indispensable Strait from the next-most-populous island of Guadalcanal, scene of an epic World War II battle and home to the capital, Honiara.

The islands share a long-running acrimony that spilled over into [civil unrest that left 200 dead](#) between 1998 and 2003.

“The peace in Solomon Islands is still very fragile,” said Clive Moore, a historian of the Solomon Islands and emeritus professor at the University of Queensland. “You only need a couple of rogue leaders and something could happen.”

Anger on the streets swelled after the Solomons government announced the China switch in September. Protesters chanting “No need China” descended on Malaita’s provincial capital, Auki. Politicians aligned with Sogavare, 65, were berated in public forums, and lawmakers alleged they were [offered bribes by Taiwan and China](#) in exchange for their support. Both governments denied any impropriety.

Much of the dissent was organized by Richard Olita, a 35-year-old former secretary of a pro-independence organization, Malaita for Democracy. In January, Olita was hired as an adviser to Daniel Suidani, the premier of Malaita. Olita says his former organization plans to hold a pro-independence rally in Auki in August.

The protests led Suidani to sign a pledge that Malaita would never engage with Beijing. He terminated licenses of businesses owned by ethnic Chinese, a key demand of Olita’s former group. The Solomon Islands government has said Suidani’s administration “faces suspension” for breaching the law.

Malaita’s anti-Beijing stance is fueled by loyalty to Taiwan, suspicions of communism, concern over Chinese [debt traps](#), and a fear of China’s animus toward Christians. Suidani, who echoes President Trump in calling coronavirus the “Wuhan virus,” [has said](#) that China has “a global ambition to dominate the world.”

Taiwan is a self-ruled democracy, but China considers the island part of its territory and has threatened to take it by force. To isolate Taiwan, Beijing has used enticements to steadily pick off its diplomatic partners, which now number just 15. A week after the Solomon Islands switched sides, another Pacific nation, Kiribati, [followed suit](#).

Covid diplomacy

As the coronavirus began tearing across the globe this year, Malaita’s officials saw a chance to hit back at both Beijing and the national government in Honiara. Staffed by individuals harboring improbable independence aspirations, the provincial government set about reanimating its relationship with Taipei, thumbing its nose at the national policy.

In March, officials from Malaita and Taiwan convened in Brisbane, Australia, for secret talks on coronavirus aid, according to Malaita's government. The meeting was convened at the request of Malaita, which sought to leverage its genuine need for health assistance to reopen ties with Taiwan.

The meeting was not approved by Sogavare, who declined to be interviewed for this article, citing a police investigation. Three Taiwanese officials familiar with Taipei's Solomon Islands policy did not dispute the Malaitan account. "We never confirm meetings between officials, nor comment on the content of the meetings," said Joanne Ou, a Taiwanese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman.

Asked whether they knew about the discussions, Australian officials responded with a general statement reiterating their "warm" relationship with the Solomons.

Soon, coronavirus aid began flowing from Taiwan to Malaita — but not to other parts of the Solomons — as the provincial administration leveraged anti-Chinese sentiment to its advantage.

The first aid consignment organized at the Brisbane meeting arrived in Auki on June 8. Suidani held a public ceremony, standing with supporters waving Taiwanese flags alongside piles of rice draped with banners that said, "Taiwan is Helping."

The aid "rekindles the longstanding friendship between the people of Malaita province and the people of Taiwan," Suidani told the crowd.

One day later, a second Taiwanese consignment was intercepted and seized by Solomon Islands' federal police at the Honiara's Henderson Airport. Sourced from Shuang Ho Hospital in Taipei, it consisted of 10,000 surgical masks, 2,600 bags of rice, thermal imaging equipment, and 20,000 bars of soap, according to a Taiwanese diplomat who facilitated the delivery. The consignment, posted via DHL, had been addressed to Olita.

In a [letter leaked to local media](#), Solomon Islands' attorney general said Malaita's solicitation of Taiwan constituted an "act of defiance" of the central government that violated sedition laws. The attorney general, John Muria Jr., is considering charges against Olita, and Malaita is preparing to countersue the national government to release the aid. Olita declined to comment, citing his potential involvement in the proceedings.

Beijing took issue with the displays of Taiwanese flags, accusing Malaita's leaders of "illegitimate, inappropriate and entirely wrong" actions that it said "hurts the national feelings of the Chinese people." Suidani said in an interview that Sogavare's government should tell China's representative "not to meddle in the domestic politics of Solomon Islands."

Malaita was not backing down. Supported by Taiwan, its officials initiated a Malaitan Lives Matter campaign, arguing that confiscating Taiwan's coronavirus aid threatened lives.

"The seizure was unjustified and without legal basis," said a Taiwanese diplomat, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive matter. "By politicizing anti-pandemic humanitarian assistance, [Beijing] is purposely delaying the delivery of crucial supplies that would help Solomon Islands combat covid-19."

A struggle for influence

Medical relief during the coronavirus pandemic has been a field of soft-power competition between China and Taiwan, whose [exclusion from the World Health Organization](#) despite its success in containing the outbreak remains a sore point in Taipei and some Western capitals.

Taiwan's efforts in Malaita also coincided with its [establishment of diplomatic relations with Somaliland](#), a breakaway region of Somalia. That move earned Taipei a second African ally, after Swaziland, and demonstrated its willingness to court recognition by non-nation states with independence aspirations, in the face of China's pressure campaign.

For its part, Malaita's success in convincing Taiwan to deliver aid illustrates the capacity of Pacific actors to cultivate — even manipulate — foreign interests to their internal advantage.

While an independent Malaita remains unlikely, disputes in the neighborhood present potential openings for both Beijing and Taipei, especially if they result in new nations; each small Pacific state ultimately means one vote in international arenas such as United Nations bodies, where China and the United States vie for influence.

Bougainville, a nearby province of Papua New Guinea, voted overwhelmingly for independence in 2019. West Papua, a region spanning two Indonesian provinces, continues its push for sovereignty, almost 60 years since its annexation.

In the Solomon Islands, the government's China policy has exposed Sogavare to problematic, and domestically unpopular, pressure from Beijing, said Tess Newton Cain, a Pacific analyst at Griffith University in Brisbane.

"The Chinese officials appear to be doing their best to get their wording into [Solomons] government press releases," she said. "Sogavare has gone all in with China."

But for now, Taiwanese aid continues to be unveiled by the Malaitan premier, who says there is "no doubt" he will maintain his relationship with Taipei despite mounting pressure.

At a public ceremony on July 8, Suidani handed 5,000 masks to his senior health official, Taiwanese flags again on display.

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HEADLINE	07/30 FBI, DOJ: errors in 29 FISA applications
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/fbi-justice-department-say-errors-found-in-29-fisa-applications-were-small/2020/07/30/8ed0d1a4-d28e-11ea-8d32-1ebf4e9d8e0d_story.html?hpid=hp_politics1-8-12_fisa-255pm%3Ahomepage%2Fstory-ans
GIST	<p>A review by the Justice Department and FBI of errors made in more than two dozen applications to a secret surveillance court has found that the mistakes were not so serious that they undercut the validity of the court documents, the FBI said Thursday.</p> <p>The statement cited a not-yet public filing that the Justice Department and FBI have made to the court created by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. The agencies filed the document in response to the department's inspector general revealing in March that his office had found a host of errors in 29 FISA applications they examined.</p> <p>As a result of the inspector general findings, the FBI and Justice Department took a closer look at those 29 applications, and has now concluded "none of the errors . . . undermined or otherwise impacted the validity" of the surveillance orders.</p> <p>The bureau said the 29 documents contained approximately 6,771 factual assertions. Those assertions also contained 201 "non-material" errors, including "minor typographical errors, such as misspelled words, and slight date inaccuracies."</p> <p>A spokeswoman for the inspector general declined to comment. Back in March, the inspector general's office said it had "identified apparent errors or inadequately supported facts in all of the 25 applications we reviewed," the memo said, adding that in another four cases, they couldn't even find a corresponding file meant to act as a fact-checking exercise for FBI agents seeking surveillance orders.</p>

	<p>Thursday's FBI statement also noted that the 29 FISA applications predated changes to the surveillance process ordered by Director Christopher A. Wray. The FBI said in its statement that the bureau "remains confident these actions will fully address the findings and recommendations" of the inspector general.</p> <p>The internal investigations of FISA work grew out of the FBI's 2016 investigation of the Trump campaign for possibly conspiring with Russian interference in that election. After Inspector General Michael Horowitz found 17 serious problems with the FBI's surveillance applications targeting former Trump campaign adviser Carter Page, investigators set out to determine if similar problems existed in other cases. Horowitz has yet to issue a final report on the subject.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	07/29 University Utah Health data breach
SOURCE	https://kutv.com/news/local/information-of-10000-patients-affected-by-data-breach-at-university-of-utah-health?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>SALT LAKE CITY (KUTV) — Approximately 10,000 patients' information was affected by a data breach at the University of Utah Health, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.</p> <p>The department states information about the breach was processed on Monday, July 20.</p> <p>The health system stated in a press release on June 5 that a breach occurred between April 6 and May 22. A hacker gained unauthorized access to some of the U of U health employees' email accounts as part of a phishing scheme. In the press release, the U did not specify how many employees were affected.</p> <p>The phishing scheme was sent to employees' email accounts and at least one employee responded to it, believing the email to be a legitimate request.</p> <p>After learning about the incident, email accounts were secured and the health system opened an investigation.</p> <p>Patient information including names, dates of birth, medical record numbers and limited clinical information was in the email accounts, and may have been exposed.</p> <p>Spokespeople for U of U Health say the breach was reported by the U in June, but it was reported by HHS in July.</p> <p>"The 10,000 was an estimate at that time. We still haven't finished the full investigation and the number could be smaller," Kathy Wilets, a spokesperson for U of U Health, stated in an email to 2News.</p> <p>U of U health notified patients earlier this year of a similar attack and "since that time has been working to implement enterprise-wide security enhancements, including expanded use of multi-factor authentication," according to a press release.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 DXC: recovered from ransomware attack
SOURCE	https://www.theregister.com/2020/07/30/dxc_ransomware_attack/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>DXC has recovered from a ransomware attack that hit its independent services-for-insurers operation Xchanging.</p> <p>The company revealed the attack on July 5th with an announcement that "certain systems" of the IT environment at its insurance managed services subsidiary Xchanging had fallen victim to ransomware.</p>

DXC didn't detail which ransomware it received, but it was clearly disruptive for Xchanging clients because the services giant revealed it was "working with affected customers to restore access to their operating environment as quickly as possible." DXC clients were insulated from the incident because Xchanging is a standalone operation.

Now DXC has [offered](#) additional detail and "confirmed containment of the incident in the immediate days following identification with minimal impact on Xchanging customers; no loss of DXC or Xchanging customer data; no impact on the wider Xchanging or DXC IT estates; and full restoration of Xchanging customer operations."

DXC enlisted Mandiant/FireEye to help with the incident and reported the matter to the relevant authorities so they can probe the event.

Together they found "no indications of previous infection, spread beyond initially impacted Xchanging systems, or continued infection by the threat actor".

Bullet dodged, then. Or was it? DXC has not offered any information on the extent of the disruptions to clients, but did say: "DXC teams worked with affected Xchanging customers to restore access to their operating environments as quickly as possible and shared Indicators of Compromise (IOCs) and other relevant technical information."

We don't know just how long those disruptions were, but *The Register's* search for news of outages at insurance companies in recent weeks has not turned up any incidents.

But even if the disruptions were very brief, it's never a good look for a services provider that advises on security to suffer a successful attack.

At least Xchanging and its clients appear to have endured ransomware rather better than the likes of [Garmin](#), [a collection of UK Universities](#) and – tragically – Australian brewer Lion that was sunk by [two shots](#) of ransomware in recent months.

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HEADLINE	07/30 Multiple Tor security issues disclosed
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/multiple-tor-security-issues-disclosed-more-to-come/#ftag=RSSbaffb68?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>Over the past week, a security researcher has published technical details about two vulnerabilities impacting the Tor network and the Tor browser.</p> <p>In blog posts last week and today, Dr. Neal Krawetz said he was going public with details on two alleged zero-days after the Tor Project has repeatedly failed to address multiple security issues he reported throughout the past years.</p> <p>The researcher also promised to reveal at least three more Tor zero-days, including one that can reveal the real-world IP address of Tor servers.</p> <p>Approached for comment on Dr. Krawetz's intentions, the Tor Project did not reply to a request for comment and provide additional details on its stance on the matter.</p> <p>THE FIRST TOR SECURITY ISSUE</p> <p>Dr. Krawetz, who operates multiple Tor nodes himself and has a long history of finding and reporting Tor bugs, disclosed the first Tor security issue last week.</p>

In a [blog post dated July 23](#), the researcher described how companies and internet service providers could block users from connecting to the Tor network by scanning network connections for "a distinct packet signature" that is unique to Tor traffic.

The packet could be used as a way to block Tor connections from initiating and effectively ban Tor altogether -- an issue that oppressive regimes are very likely to abuse.

THE SECOND TOR SECURITY ISSUE

Earlier today, in a [blog post](#) shared with ZDNet, Dr. Krawetz disclosed a second issue. This one, like the first, allows network operators to detect Tor traffic.

However, while the first issue could be used to detect direct connections to the Tor network (to Tor guard nodes), the second one can be used to detect indirect connections.

These are connections that users make to Tor bridges, a special type of entry points into the Tor network that can be used when companies and ISPs block direct access to the Tor network.

Tor bridges act as proxy points and relay connections from the user to the Tor network itself. Because they are sensitive Tor servers, the list of Tor bridges is being constantly updated to make it difficult for ISPs to block it.

But Dr. Krawetz says connections to Tor bridges can be easily detected, as well, using a similar technique of tracking specific TCP packets.

"Between my previous blog entry and this one, you now have everything you need to enforce the policy [of blocking Tor on a network] with a real-time stateful packet inspection system. You can stop all of your users from connecting to the Tor network, whether they connect directly or use a bridge," Dr. Krawetz said.

Both issues are specifically concerning for Tor users residing in countries with oppressive regimes.

DISSATISFACTION TOWARDS THE TOR PROJECT'S SECURITY STANCE

The reason why Dr. Krawetz is publishing these issues in Tor is that he believes the Tor Project does not take the security of its networks, tools, and users seriously enough.

The security researcher cites previous incidents when he tried to report bugs to the Tor Project only to be told that they were aware of the issue, working on a fix, but never actually deploying said fix. This includes:

- A bug that allows websites to detect and fingerprint Tor browser users by the width of their scrollbar, which the Tor Project has known about [since at least June 2017](#).
- A bug that allows network adversaries to detect Tor bridge servers using their OR (Onion routing) port, [reported eight years ago](#).
- A bug that lets attackers identify the SSL library used by Tor servers, [reported on December 27, 2017](#).

All of these issues are still not fixed, which has led Dr. Krawetz in early June 2020 to abandon his collaboration with the Tor Project and take the current approach of publicly shaming the company into taking action.

Updated at 20:30 ET, July 30:

The Tor Project has responded to Dr. Krawetz' two blog posts. It's a lengthy response detailing each issue, which we are reproducing in full below. In summary, the Tor Project's reply is that they are aware of the issues the researcher reported, but they differ on the threats they pose to users, claiming they can't be enforced at scale.

The full reply is below:

"We have been working on the first issue raised in the blog post published 7/23 (scrollbar width) here: <https://gitlab.torproject.org/tpo/applications/tor-browser/-/issues/22137>. The blog post claims that the scrollbar width of a Tor Browser user can be used to distinguish which operating system they are using. There are other ways a Tor Browser user's operating system can be discovered. This is known and publicly documented. When Tor Browser does not communicate the operating system of its user, usability decreases. Commonly used websites cease to function (ie, Google Docs). The security downside of operating system detection is mild (you can still blend with everybody else who uses that operating system), while the usability tradeoff is quite extreme. Tor Browser has an end goal of eliminating these privacy leaks without breaking web pages, but it is a slow process (especially in a web browser like Firefox) and leaking the same information in multiple way is not worse than leaking it once. So, while we appreciate (and need) bug reports like this, we are slowly chipping away at the various leaks without further breaking the web, and that takes time.

"The second claim in the first blog post published 7/23 outlines a way to recognize vanilla Tor traffic based on how it uses TLS with firewall rules. Fingerprinting Tor traffic is a well-known and documented issue. It's an issue that has been discussed for more than a decade. (Example: <https://gitlab.torproject.org/tpo/core/torspec/-/blob/master/proposals/106-less-tls-constraint.txt>). Fixing the way Tor traffic can be fingerprinted by its TLS use is very small step in the censorship arms race. We decided that we should not try to imitate normal SSL certs because that's a fight we can't win. Our goal is to help people connect to Tor from censored networks. Research has shown that making your traffic look like some other form of traffic usually leads to failure (<http://www.cs.utexas.edu/~amir/papers/parrot.pdf>). The strategy Tor has decided to take is better and more widely applicable, and that strategy is developing better pluggable transports. Tor has an entire anti-censorship team tackling this problem and has funding earmarked for this specific purpose.

"The blog post published 7/30 is correct in suggesting that a finely-calibrated decision tree can be highly effective in detecting obfs4; this is a weakness of obfs4. However, what works in someone's living room doesn't necessarily work at nation-scale: running a decision tree on many TCP flows is expensive (but not impossible) and it takes work to calibrate it. When considering the efficacy of this, one also has to take into account the base rate fallacy: the proportion between circumvention traffic and non-circumvention traffic is not 1:1, meaning that false positives/negative rate of 1% (which seems low!) can still result in false positives significantly outweighing true positives. That said, obfs4 is certainly vulnerable to this class of attack. The post says "However, I know of no public disclosure for detecting and blocking obfs4." There's work in the academic literature. See Wang et al.'s CCS'15 paper: <https://censorbib.nymity.ch/#Wang2015a>. See also Frolov et al.'s NDSS'20 paper: <https://censorbib.nymity.ch/#Frolov2020a>. The blog post cites Dunna's FOCI'18 paper to support his claim that the GFW can detect obfs4. This must be a misunderstanding. On page 2, the paper says: "We find that the two most popular pluggable transports (Meek [7] and Obfs4 [18]) are still effective in evading GFW's blocking of Tor (Section 5.1)." The blog post also cites another post to support the same claim: <https://medium.com/@phoebecross/using-tor-in-china-1b84349925da>. This blog post correctly points out that obfs4 bridges that are distributed over BridgeDB are blocked whereas private obfs4 bridges work. This means that censors are not blocking the obfs4 protocol, but are able to intercept bridge information from our distributors. One has to distinguish the protocol from the way one distributes endpoints.

"The findings published today (7/30) are variants of existing attacks (which is great!) but not 0-days. They are worth investigating but are presented with little evidence that they work at scale."

The Tor Project also disagreed with Dr. Krawetz' classification of the issues he detailed on the blog as zero-days. The title has been updated accordingly.

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SOURCE	https://ciso.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/android-malware-blackrock-prowling-in-cyber-space-may-steal-banking-data-advisory/77260500
GIST	<p>The country's cyber security agency has issued an alert against an Android malware, dubbed 'BlackRock', that has the potential to "steal" banking and other confidential data of an user. It can extract credentials and credit card information from over 300 apps such as email, e-commerce apps, social media apps, besides banking and financial apps, the CERT-In said in an advisory.</p> <p>The "attack campaign" of this 'Trojan' category virus is active globally, said the Computer Emergency Response Team of India (CERT-In), the national technology arm to combat cyberattacks and guard Indian cyber space.</p> <p>"It is reported that a new Android malware strain dubbed 'BlackRock' equipped with datastealing capabilities is attacking a wide range of Android applications.</p> <p>"The malware is developed using the source code of Xerxes banking malware which itself is a variant of LokiBot Android Trojan," the advisory said.</p> <p>The "noteworthy feature" of this malware is that its target list contains 337 applications including banking and financial applications, and also non-financial and well-known commonly used brand name apps on an Android device that focus on social, communication, networking and dating platforms, it said.</p> <p>"It can steal credentials and credit card information from over 300 plus apps like email clients, e-commerce apps, virtual currency, messaging or social media apps, entertainment apps, banking and financial apps etc," the advisory said.</p> <p>The advisory described the infection activity of the virus.</p> <p>"When the malware is launched on the victim's device, it hides its icon from app drawer and then masquerades itself as a fake Google update to request accessibility service privileges."</p> <p>"Once this privilege is granted, it becomes free to grant itself additional permissions allowing it to function further without interacting with user," it said.</p> <p>Threat operators can issue a number of commands for various operations such as logging keystrokes, spamming the victims' contact lists with text messages, setting the malware as the default SMS manager, pushing system notifications to the C2 (command and control) server, locking the victim in the device home screen and steal notifications, send spam and steal SMS messages and many more such activities, the advisory said.</p> <p>The virus is deadly as it has the capability to "deflect" majority of anti-virus applications.</p> <p>"Another feature of this Android Trojan is making use of "Android work profiles" to control the compromised device without requiring complete admin rights and instead creating and attributing its own managed profile to gain admin privileges," it said.</p> <p>The federal cyber security agency suggested some counter-measures: do not download and install applications from untrusted sources and use reputed application market only; always review the app details, number of downloads, user reviews and check 'additional information' section before downloading an app from play store, use device encryption or encrypt external SD card; avoid using unsecured, unknown Wi-Fi networks among others.</p> <p>Also, when it comes to downloading banking apps one should use the official and verified version and users should make sure they have a strong AI-powered mobile antivirus installed to detect and block this kind of tricky malware, the advisory said</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 Ransomware: a phishing email click away
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/ransomware-how-clicking-on-one-phishing-email-left-a-whole-business-in-big-trouble/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>Security experts have given an insight into how a targeted ransomware attack took down the network of a food and drink manufacturer after hackers took advantage of common security vulnerabilities.</p> <p>The crooks used a phishing attack and took advantage of a number of vulnerabilities – from old hardware to default passwords – to first deploy Emotet and Trickbot malware before delivering the Ryuk ransomware and attempting to extort a fee from the victim to restore the network.</p> <p>In this case, the organisation didn't opt to pay the ransom – something that authorities discourage and would only fund additional attacks by cyber criminals – but instead had security experts come in to examine the network and restore functionality within 48 hours.</p> <p>"This was a targeted attack. This is targeting organisations such as this one which, if they don't have the security retainer or IT staff, the initial reaction would be to give into the ransomware attack because they want to return their operations quickly," Bindu Sundaesan, director at AT&T cybersecurity, told ZDNet.</p> <p>AT&T investigated the attack and helped the unnamed manufacturer get back online without giving into a ransom demand while also experiencing the least amount of disruption to production as possible. But the company likely would not have fallen victim if basic security vulnerabilities hadn't allowed the initial stages of the attack to happen.</p> <p>Ryuk, like some other forms of ransomware, is deployed as the final stage in a three-pronged attack that also delivers Emotet and Trickbot. Emotet started life as a banking trojan before evolving into a botnet that is leased out to deliver other malware, which in this case is the Trickbot trojan.</p> <p>Trickbot is a powerful form of malware that provides attackers with a full backdoor into compromised systems, including the ability to move around networks, issue commands and steal additional data.</p> <p>After this the Ryuk ransomware is downloaded onto the network by the hackers because cyber criminals view it as the quickest and easiest way to make money from a compromised network.</p> <p>While many ransomware campaigns now start with targeting remote ports, this one began with a phishing attack.</p> <p>"A user was sent a Microsoft Word document as part of a phishing campaign. It was labelled as an invoice and this user downloaded the document, then malicious code executed a PowerShell command that downloaded an Emotet payload," Sundaesan explained.</p> <p>PowerShell commands generally aren't required by users who don't need administrator rights, so if PowerShell had been disabled for those who don't need it, the cyberattack could've been cut off at this point.</p> <p>After Emotet formed the initial part of the attack, gaining a foothold in the network the next step was to use the Trickbot malware to steal login credentials for corporate accounts and cloud services to gain access to other parts of the network.</p> <p>By exploiting this cycle, cyber criminals were able to gain control of over half the network, before eventually delivering the Ryuk ransomware.</p> <p>"Malware like this wants to get the most bang for its buck and go after organisations that are at the point where they feel like they need to give in due to the damage it's costing to their network, the valuable data that's being held – so they have a sense of urgency," said Sundaesan.</p>

However, the attack could have been much worse, given Ryuk had not compromised the entire network but about 60% of it, including ordering and billing applications. This was in part because security personnel were about to contain the attack after being called in by the manufacturer.

"The ability to contain it and the response time was crucial. The ability to contain the incident is the key to recover from it and having the business up and running before it got to the crucial databases," Sundaresan explained.

Within 48 hours, much of the business was back up and running again – crucially without having given into paying a ransom demand to criminals. However, two days of downtime would have been costly to the organisation and restoring the network isn't likely to have been cheap either – plus there's the prospect of having to upgrade security in the aftermath, so attackers don't strike again.

And like many organisations that fall victim to cyberattacks, this one could've prevented itself from falling victim to ransomware by ensuring that cybersecurity hygiene was well managed – but there were [simple-to-fix vulnerabilities](#) that attackers were able to take advantage of.

For example, the vulnerabilities that Emotet, Trickbot and Ryuk take advantage of have been known about for a long time and critical security updates have been issued to protect users – but despite these updates being years old, [there are organisations that still haven't applied them](#).

"Microsoft has put out patches but patch management and security hygiene still remain issues for organisations," said Sundaresan, who added that this ransomware attack could've also been prevented if strong passwords and multi-factor authentication had been used to secure systems.

"A lot of this can be prevented. If they didn't have default password and end-of-life machines, a lot of this would've been prevented."

And when it comes to cyberattacks, prevention is the best cure, because not only does it stop your organisation from falling victim to ransomware or other malware, the cost of securing the network in advance is almost certainly going to be less expensive than having to do it in the aftermath of an incident – especially if the attack disrupts operations or causes reputational damage that could keep customers away.

So while it might potentially seem expensive, it could be very much worth having security experts from outside the organisation come in to examine the network before damage can be done – and not after.

"Get a security assessment done from an offensive attacker point of view, you don't want to be just doing the security initiatives from compliance or internal testing – it's not enough. You have to get your network tested using multiple attack vectors and you have to do it objectively with [full penetration testing](#)," Sundaresan said.

Because ultimately, ransomware – be it Ryuk or another family – is still out there and still remains a threat because too many organisations aren't following the security basics. And until this is fixed, ransomware [will remain a problem](#).

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HEADLINE	07/29 New hacker-for-hire mercenary group
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/kaspersky-new-hacker-for-hire-mercenary-group-is-targeting-european-law-firms/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>Russian cyber-security firm Kaspersky said today in a webinar that it discovered a new hacker-for-hire mercenary group that appears to have been active for almost a decade.</p> <p>The group, which Kaspersky codenamed Deceptikons, has primarily targeted law firms and fintech companies, according to Kaspersky malware analyst Vicente Diaz.</p>

The Kaspersky researcher said the group appears to be focused on stealing business and financial secrets, rather than government-related information.

Diaz said most of the group's targets are located in Europe, and occasionally some Middle East countries like Israel, Jordan, and Egypt.

The Deceptikons' group most recent attacks included a 2019 spear-phishing campaign against a set of European law firms, where the group deployed malicious PowerShell scripts to infect hosts.

DECEPTIKONS DOESN'T USE ZERO-DAYS

"The group is not technically sophisticated and has not, to our knowledge, deployed zero-day exploits," the Russian security firm said today in a separate [written report](#) that accompanied its [webinar](#).

Kaspersky described the group's infrastructure and malware as "clever, rather than technically advanced" and with a focus on gaining persistence on infected hosts.

Most attacks seem to follow a similar pattern, starting with a spear-phishing email that carries a malicious modified LNK (shortcut) file.

If the victims download and interact with the file (such as clicking it), the shortcut downloads and runs a PowerShell-based backdoor trojan.

Diaz said Kaspersky would be publishing a more complete technical report on Deceptikons activities in the coming weeks.

SECOND HACKER-FOR-HIRE GROUP EXPOSED THIS YEAR

This is the second major hacker-for-hire mercenary group that came to light this year after [Citizen Lab exposed Indian firm BellTroX InfoTech Services](#) as the group behind the Dark Basin APT.

Kaspersky did not link Deceptikons to any real-world entity, however. At least, for the time being.

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HEADLINE	07/30 Mobile operating systems bugs surge 50%
SOURCE	https://cyware.com/news/researchers-report-mobile-operating-systems-bugs-have-surged-50-ba935c50
GIST	<p>To keep track of all software product vulnerabilities, the National Institute of Standards and Technology maintains a 'National Vulnerability Database' (NVD), where all information about open vulnerabilities is recorded. Recently, Skybox Security released a midyear update to its 2020 Vulnerability and Threat Trends Report, which provides some interesting insights about the vulnerabilities.</p> <p>A major increase in the number of vulnerabilities</p> <p>The report contained some concerning findings for organizations as they struggle to manage and mitigate cyber-risk at a time of mass remote working.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skybox Security predicts that 2020 will end with 20,000 reported vulnerabilities, as compared to 17,306 in 2019. Till mid-2020, 9000 vulnerabilities have been reported.• The report stated that vulnerabilities on the smartphone OSs increased by 50 percent, in which Android flaws have a major contribution. A 50% year-on-year increase in Android OS flaws can be blamed for some part of this increase.• The development of new ransomware and malware samples has drastically increased during the COVID-19, leading to a boom in the identification of new vulnerability exploits.• Moreover, there has been a significant increase in exploits taking advantage of the Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP).

Return to Top	<p>Massive batches of patches</p> <p>Several vendors have been releasing massive batches of patches, and organizations are often observed struggling to cope with these frequent patches.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In July 2020, Microsoft released its July 2020 Patch Tuesday update to address a total of 123 security vulnerabilities across 13 products. • In April 2020, Oracle released a Critical Patch Update including 405 patches for its 13 key Oracle products such as Oracle Financial Services Applications, Oracle MySQL, etc. • In the same month, Google addressed over 50 vulnerabilities in the Android operating system, including four critical issues in the System component, in its April 2020 Patch update. <p>Vulnerabilities across extended networks</p> <p>A drastic increase in vulnerability count and frequency of patches can easily turn into an overwhelming pressure on security teams. Organizations are advised to ensure security for all connected devices across the expanded network coverage due to the work-from-home situation, and avoid forthcoming mishaps.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 Lockdowns hurt dark web travel fraudsters
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/dark-web-travel-fraudsters-left-hurting-from-lockdowns/d/d-id/1338505
GIST	<p>Though the slowdown in global travel hasn't altogether deterred hackers from trying to make a buck off of fraudulent offers and discount schemes that steal from travel loyalty programs, new research out today shows many Dark Web travel agencies are feeling the pain of lockdowns just like the travel industry organizations they target.</p> <p>Criminal enterprises that hack the travel industry to sell fraudulent redemption of discounts, rebates, and stolen loyalty points have been evolving for several years now. Back in 2017, Trend Micro researchers published research that showed the broad scope of scamming and thievery that was starting to coalesce in underground markets into a comprehensive bazaar of shadow travel offerings.</p> <p>"Fraudulent online transactions involving travel documents, airline and hotel loyalty accounts, and other travel-related services have become valued commodities the past several years," Trend researchers wrote then. "The Dark Web, underground forums, Telegram channels, and even social network postings advertise these services with the intention of providing cheap price tags for those who do not have a problem breaking the law."</p> <p>Since then, sophisticated discount travel agencies have continued to sprout up on the Dark Web, using various means of fraud to supply them with "product" -- from stealing employee and corporate discount codes to using account takeover (ATO) attacks to control frequent flyer or hotel loyalty accounts containing many accrued miles or points. According to experts at Forter, last year fraud attacks against loyalty programs increased by 89% -- likely driven, at least in part, by shadow travel industry activity.</p> <p>In February, before the impacts of COVID-19 went fully global, researchers at Digital Shadows' Photon Research Team related observations of a still-thriving Dark Web travel agency marketplace. They explained many of these attackers succeeded by booking last-minute flights to fly under the fraud detection radar and exploited weaknesses in third-party booking services to schedule trips without detection.</p> <p>Authorities have been working on this problem. For example, in November 2019 an international effort coordinated by Europol, Interpol, Ameripol, and the National Cyber-Forensics & Training Alliance arrested 79 people suspected of fraudulent ticket purchases traveling across numerous worldwide airports. But like any lucrative cybercriminal endeavor, Dark Web agencies have proved to be a hydra with too many heads to count.</p>

	<p>However, every monster has its weakness, and it appears the global pandemic is one of them for shadow travel fraud. Today Photon researchers did an update of their work from February and found Dark Web travel agencies are feeling the pain experienced across the legitimate travel industry. For example, they explained one instance of a fraudster complaining on an online service of work drying up as evidence that many of these agencies have fallen quiet during lockdowns.</p> <p>"It seems that the shadow travel scene more broadly has demonstrably felt the impact of the COVID-19-prompted downturn," Digital Shadows researchers wrote. "In general, there appear to be far fewer advertisements for such services this time around: For example, there were three times the number of travel-related search results returned on Verified (Dark Web) forum in February 2020 compared to May 2020."</p> <p>The question remains how long this lull will last. Photon researchers say they'll be keeping tabs on shadow travel activity as travel restrictions start to ease around the world.</p> <p>"As travel bans are gradually being lifted and 'air bridges' introduced, especially across Europe, it will be interesting to see how quickly other travel vendors react and resume their advertisements for fraudulent airline tickets, hotel rooms, and the like," they wrote. "Just as interesting will be seeing how many of the previously well-established travel vendors will have been able to weather the storm, and how fast their trade will pick up again."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 Office 365 phishing abuses Google Ads
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/office-365-phishing-abuses-google-ads-to-bypass-email-filters/
GIST	<p>An Office 365 phishing campaign abused Google Ads to bypass secure email gateways (SEGs), redirecting employees of targeted organizations to phishing landing pages and stealing their Microsoft credentials.</p> <p>The attackers behind these attacks took advantage of the fact that the domains used by Google's Ads platform are overlooked by SEGs, which allows them to deliver their phishing messages to their targets' inboxes bypassing email filters.</p> <p>SEGs are designed to block spam and phishing attempts from reaching their users' mailboxes using filtering stacks that will scan all incoming emails for malicious content.</p> <p>Targeted phishing campaign</p> <p>The phishing emails were sent to employees of multiple organizations from compromised accounts as Cofense Phishing Defense Center (PDC) researchers who spotted this campaign found.</p> <p>Potential victims are informed of recent policy changes and are asked to accept the changes to be able to continue using services.</p> <p>The accept button embedded within the phishing emails, however, will redirect the victims to phishing landing pages with the help of a Google Ads redirect.</p> <p>This hints at the fact that the attackers paid for a Google ad and then used the ad's URL to redirect targets to pages used to steal Office 365 credentials, thus making sure that the victims always receive their phishing messages.</p> <p>The phishing pages used in this campaign are designed to mimic legitimate Microsoft pages, featuring a Microsoft logo and the targets' company logo.</p>

Targets are first sent to a cloned Microsoft privacy policy page and then to the final phishing page that mimics the victims' company-branded Office 365 sign-in pages.

Once they entered their credentials and hit the "Next" button, their account info was immediately sent to the phishers and they were sent to a new page displaying a "We've updated our terms." message.

As a final measure designed to hide the attack from the victims, the employees who fell victim to this phishing attack were sent to the Microsoft Services Agreement page.

Other methods used to bypass email filters

Phishers have used a wide array of tactics to make sure that their phishing messages have a higher chance to circumvent their targets' email protection filters.

A recent example is a [highly targeted Bank of America phishing campaign](#) that sent emails with body contents free of links to malicious-looking domains, using SendGrid to successfully pass SPF, DKIM, and DMARC authentication checks.

Other phishers have bypassed security filters in the past by using [QR codes](#) and [WeTransfer file-sharing notifications](#) to make sure that their emails reached their targets' inboxes.

They were also seen abusing [Google Docs](#), [Google Drive](#), and [Microsoft SharePoint](#) as part of phishing campaigns capable of dodging SEGs to infect victims with malware or to steal their credentials and financial info.

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HEADLINE	07/31 Canadian MSP discloses data breach
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/canadian-msp-discloses-data-breach-failed-ransomware-attack/
GIST	<p>Managed service provider Pivot Technology Solutions has disclosed that it was the victim of a ransomware attack that resulted with sensitive information being accessed by the hackers.</p> <p>The incident occurred last month and hit impacted data held by the parent company and its subsidiaries and/or former and current affiliates.</p> <p>No encrypted systems</p> <p>Threat actors were not able to complete the attack and encrypt files on the company systems but they spent enough time on the network to access sensitive information and also steal some of it.</p> <p>Pivot's quick response to the June 12 incident made it possible to continue operations, said Kevin Shank, President and CEO of the company, earlier this month.</p> <p>An investigation of the incident conducted by a cyber forensic firm revealed on July 1 that the intruders had access to and exfiltrated "limited personal information of US employees and consultants."</p> <p>Specifically, inspection revealed on July 7 that the attackers compromised names, addresses, dates of birth, gender, disability status, and type of insurance coverage.</p> <p>They also pulled payroll data (details about deductions, 401k forms, income, and benefits), banking details (routing and account numbers), social security numbers and related information.</p> <p>In a notification letter for affected parties recorded by the California Office of the Attorney General, the company informs that the hackers accessed data stored by the following subsidiaries and past and present affiliates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pivot Technology Services Corporation (New Prosys)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TeraMach Technologies • Pivot Acquisition Corp. • ACS (US), Inc. • Applied Computer Solutions, Inc. • Austin Ribbon & Computer Supplies, Inc. • ProSys Information Systems, Inc. • Smart-Edge.com, Inc. • Pivot Shared Services, Ltd. <p>Following this incident, all companies have improved their security protocols for defending their networks, email systems, workstations, and personal information.</p> <p>Pivot advises affected parties to take additional steps to protect against identity theft and offers free monitoring solutions to track ill-doings stemming from this attack.</p> <p>Pivot Technology Solutions provides managed IT services to governments, educational institutions, and various organizations in the private sector, some of them members of Fortune 1,000.</p> <p>MSPs are valuable target to ransomware actors, who can use access to its networks to pivot to customer systems.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 NKorea hackers target defense contractors
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/us-defense-contractors-targeted-by-north-korean-phishing-attacks/
GIST	<p>Employees of U.S. defense and aerospace contractors were targeted in a large scale spear-phishing campaign between early April and mid-June 2020 in a series of phishing attacks designed to infect their devices and to exfiltrate defense tech intelligence.</p> <p>Throughout this series of attacks dubbed 'Operation North Star' by McAfee Advanced Threat Research (ATR) researchers who spotted it, the spear-phishing emails were camouflaged as fake job offers from high-profile defense contractors, a tactic used by other similar campaigns targeting the same industries in 2017 and 2019.</p> <p>McAfee linked these attacks to the Hidden Cobra, the threat group behind the previous military cyber-espionage phishing campaigns, based on similarities found in implant execution code and core functionality.</p> <p>Hidden Cobra is an umbrella term used by the US Intelligence Community to track North Korean malicious cyber activity attributed to several hacking groups including but not limited to APT 37, Lazarus Group, APT 38, DarkHotel, Kimsuky, and Andariel.</p> <p>Cyber-espionage campaign targeting defense intelligence</p> <p>The main goal of this campaign was to collect military and defense tech intelligence from experienced aerospace and defense employees, later to be exfiltrated to compromised infrastructure from European countries also used to deliver malicious implants to targets' infected devices.</p> <p>"The lure documents contained job descriptions for engineering and project management positions in relationship to active defense contracts," McAfee said.</p> <p>"The individuals receiving these documents in a targeted spear phishing campaign were likely to have an interest in the content within these lure documents, as we have observed in previous campaigns, as well as some knowledge or relationship to the defense industry."</p>

The fake job offerings were sent by attackers posing as "recruiters" to potential victims through both phishing emails and social networks.

They included Senior Design Engineer and System Engineer positions at US defense programs and groups such as the F-22 Fighter Jet Program, Defense, Space and Security (DSS) jobs, the Aeronautics Integrated Fighter Group, and multiple military aircraft modernization programs.

North Korean malicious activity

This operation lines up with similar North Korean intelligence gathering and financially motivated efforts recently reported by security researchers with private cyber-security firms and government organizations.

Since April 2020, the U.S. government is [offering a reward of up to \\$5 million](#) for any info on any DPRK hackers' cyber activity, including past or ongoing campaigns if that leads to the disruption of illegal activities or the identification of North Korean actors involved.

In March 2020, two Chinese nationals were charged for laundering over \$100 million worth of cryptocurrency out of roughly [\\$250 million stolen by Lazarus North Korean hackers in 2018](#) as part of a single cryptocurrency exchange hack.

In all, United Nations (UN) Security Council experts say that North Koreans were behind cryptocurrency heists that led to [financial losses of \\$571 million](#) in 2017 and 2018, with the U.S. Treasury having [sanctioned three DPRK-sponsored hacking groups](#) (Lazarus, Andariel, and Bluenoroff) in September 2019.

In more recent news, North Korean hackers have also been linked by web security company Sansec to [credit card stealing attacks targeting the online stores of large US and European retailers](#) for at least a year.

Kaspersky researchers also discovered that Lazarus Group hackers have [developed and are actively using VHD ransomware](#) against enterprise targets and are also stealing data using a recently spotted [malware framework known as MATA](#).

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HEADLINE	07/29 Crypto wallet Ledger data breach
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/crypto-wallet-ledger-data-breach-hackers-steal-data/
GIST	<p>In the world of cryptocurrencies, we have different types of wallets including hardware, desktop, mobile, and web ones. While the latter 3 can be grouped into the software category, the foremost hardware one is unique in that it requires a standalone device that functions as a wallet.</p> <p>One vendor offering these happens to be Ledger – quite famous in the crypto world and trusted as well. However, as with even the most secure and responsible for companies, data breaches are only a matter of time.</p> <p>Such was the fate of Ledger too when recently the company has disclosed that it suffered a hack of which it was alerted on 14 July 2020 by a researcher through their bug bounty program.</p> <p>Despite them immediately taking action and patching the flaw in a short period of time, only a few weeks later on the 25th of July, they found out it had been “further exploited” by the attackers.</p> <p>The data gained access by attackers includes their e-commerce and marketing database which naturally due to its nature of order confirmations and marketing emails revealed the following records:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Email addresses – 1 million2. Full names – 95003. Postal addresses – 9500

4. Phone numbers – 9500
5. Ordered products – 9500

Elaborating on their response, Ledger stated in a [blog post](#) that, *On the 17th of July, we notified the CNIL, the French Data Protection Authority which ensures that data privacy law is applied to the collection, storage, and use of personal data. On the 21st of July, we partnered with Orange Cyberdefense to assess the potential damages of the data breach and identify potential data breaches.*

Delving into the details, the team elaborated on how the threat actors were successful due to unauthorized access to an API key. Currently, the key has been disabled but it remains to see how the company implements further measures to prevent such a disclosure in the future.

To conclude, this is [not the first time](#) that Ledger has been involved in such an incident. The good thing nonetheless is that no payment information and credentials were leaked so the money of all users is safe. Ledger users affected by the breach have also been informed in a timely fashion.

On the other hand, a suggestion for all users of the hardware wallet is to understand that under no circumstances will Ledger or for the matter any cryptocurrency wallet developer will ask you for your secret key or recovery phrase. Therefore, if someone claiming to be from the company does so, they're a fraud you should be running away from.

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HEADLINE	07/31 Australia: 1,050 data breaches in 2019
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/1050-data-breaches-reported-to-australian-commissioner-in-12-months/
GIST	<p>The total number of reported data breaches in Australia for the 2019-20 financial year totalled 1,050, the first of two half-year reports from the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) has shown.</p> <p>For the six months spanning January to June 2020, 518 breaches were notified under the Notifiable Data Breaches (NDB) scheme, down 3% from the 532 reported in July to December 2019.</p> <p>124 of those breaches occurred during May, the most reported in any calendar month since the scheme began in February 2018.</p> <p>Most of these were attributed to human error, but OAIC said it has yet to identify a specific cause for the increase, explaining in its report [PDF] it was not aware of any evidence that suggested the increase was related to changed business practices resulting from COVID-19, given that notifications across the period were otherwise broadly consistent with longer term trends.</p> <p>Malicious or criminal activity accounted for 317 notifications during the reported period.</p> <p>Attacks included cyber incidents such as phishing and malware, data breaches caused by social engineering or impersonation, theft of paperwork or storage devices, and actions taken by a rogue employee or insider threat, the OAIC said.</p> <p>The majority of cyber incidents during the reporting period were linked to malicious actors gaining access to accounts either through phishing attacks or by using compromised account details. Compromised credentials were the case for 133 notifications, ransomware attack for 33 notifications, and "hacking" for 29.</p> <p>With ransomware this year taking out beverage company Lion and logistics giant Toll, twice, the OAIC report highlighted they weren't alone, with 33 cases of ransomware reported from January to June 2020.</p>

Data breaches resulting from human error was the case for 176 breaches from January through June, with personal information sent to the wrong recipient via email accounting for 68 of those cases. In two cases, a fax with personal information was sent to the wrong recipient.

There was a loss of paperwork or storage device on 14 of the reported occasions.

System faults accounted for 5% of data breaches during this reporting period.

The health sector is again the highest reporting sector, notifying 115 breaches, and finance is next down the line, notifying 75 breaches had occurred during the six-month period. Education reported 44, insurance 35, and legal, accounting, and management services reported 26 breaches.

Most NDBs in the period involved the personal information of 100 individuals or fewer. In one instance, the number of individuals affected was over 10 million. The OAIC noted that in counting individuals affected, it also took into consideration the global presence of the reporting entity.

In 84% of reported instances, contact information such as an individual's home address, phone number, or email address was breached, while over a third of all breaches notified during the period involved identity information such as passport number, driver licence number, or other government identifiers.

Data breaches notified in the six-month period also involved tax file numbers; financial details, such as bank account or credit card numbers; and health information.

The OAIC said there have been multiple instances of incomplete notifications of data breaches where entities may not have fully met their obligations with regard to the content of the notification to individuals affected by a data breach.

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HEADLINE	07/29 Current events as lures
SOURCE	https://blog.talosintelligence.com/2020/07/current-events-lures.html
GIST	<p>The goal of malicious activity is to compromise the system to install some unauthorized software. Increasingly that goal is tied to one thing: the user. Over the past several years, we as an industry improved exploit mitigation and the value of working exploits has increased accordingly. Together, these changes have had an impact on the threat landscape. We still see large amounts of active exploitation, but enterprises are getting better at defending against them.</p> <p>This has left adversaries with a couple of options, develop or buy a working exploit that will defeat today's protections, which can be costly, or pivot to enticing a user to help you. In today's threat landscape, adversaries are always trying to develop and implement the most effective lures to try and draw users into their infection path. They've tried a multitude of different tactics in this space, but one always stands out — current events.</p> <p>In today's world, everyone's thoughts immediately go to COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter, since both stories have dominated the threat landscape over the last several months, but this is something that organically happens frequently on the threat landscape. So much so that organizations should include it in their threat hunting activities. This blog is going to walk through the why and how.</p> <p>CURRENT EVENTS AS LURES</p> <p>For as long as adversaries have been trying to lure users to infecting themselves, they've been leveraging current events. This can take lots of forms and sometimes can be calendar-based. These include things like tax season, holidays and shopping events like Black Friday. Every year, we see this type of activity spike around these respective events. This isn't just a U.S.-focused event, either. In the past, we've covered tax scams that targeted a wide array of countries in both North America and Europe. In some cases, these</p>

	<p>scams were in the native language but, as is usually the case, the majority were in English.</p> <p>These annual events are things that security organizations will see regularly, and therefore should be prepared to handle. This would include processes and procedures around hunting these threats and how to prepare employees with training prior to applicable periods of activity.</p> <p>There is a second class of lures that are being used effectively and they are tied to what is going on in society today. Right now, that is overwhelmingly tied to two things: COVID-19 and racial injustice. Both are global news stories that touch virtually everyone on the planet — a reach that wide and effective is impossible for criminals to ignore, and cyber criminals are no exception. Over the last several months, virtually every threat Talos has written about has used COVID as a lure in one campaign or another. This isn't restricted to just crimeware or financially motivated malware. We've also seen it used in more targeted attacks such as PoetRAT. This shows how effective this can be as a lure. Early in the pandemic, we covered how quickly we saw adversaries move to coronavirus lures and now we've seen most commodity malware families be delivered using COVID-19 or coronavirus effectively.</p> <p>These lures tied to events as they happen are difficult to anticipate, but security organizations need to have procedures in place to handle these shifts, ideally flexing the list of words and events used in hunting based on current events in the news. Let's start by running through some use cases from the last several months that touch on not only COVID lures but also tax season and racial injustice.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/29 Critical bugs in utilities VPNs
SOURCE	https://threatpost.com/critical-bugs-utilities-vpns-physical-damage/157835/
GIST	<p>Remote code-execution vulnerabilities in virtual private network (VPN) products could impact the physical functioning of critical infrastructure in the oil and gas, water and electric utilities space, according to researchers.</p> <p>Researchers at Claroty found that VPNs used to provide remote access to operational technology (OT) networks in industrial systems are vulnerable to an array of security bugs, which could give an attacker direct access to field devices and cause physical damage or shut-downs.</p> <p>The security vulnerabilities affect three vendors specifically, Secomea, Moxa and HMS Networks, and any of their white-label partners.</p> <p>“These dedicated remote-access solutions are mainly focused on the industrial control system (ICS) industry, and their main use case is to provide maintenance and monitoring to field controllers and devices including programmable logic controllers (PLCs) and input/output (IO) devices,” analysts said in a posting issued on Wednesday. “Apart from connectivity between sites these solutions are also used to enable remote operators and third-party vendors to dial into customer sites and provide maintenance and monitoring for PLCs and other Level 1/0 devices. This kind of access has become especially prioritized in recent months due to the new reality of COVID-19.”</p> <p>The Flaws</p> <p>A critical bug in Secomea GateManager (CVE-2020-14500) occurs due to improper handling of HTTP request headers provided by the client. This could allow an attacker to remotely exploit GateManager to achieve remote code execution without any authentication required.</p> <p>“If carried out successfully, such an attack could result in a complete security breach that grants full access to a customer’s internal network, along with the ability to decrypt all traffic that passes through the VPN,” according to Claroty.</p> <p>GateManager is an ICS component located at the perimeter of a customer network, which accepts connections from remote sites/clients. It’s deployed worldwide as a cloud-based software-as-a-service</p>

solution, both in branded and white-label instances; these cloud servers are multi-tenant but can also be installed and configured as on-premise solutions.

According to Secomea's website, the GateManager cloud server is designed to "deliver the convenience of fast and easy web access, while avoiding server setups." However, the cloud-based nature of the product could mean a wider attack surface for cybercriminals looking to exploit this bug, researchers said.

"In recent years we have seen a shift toward cloud-based remote access solutions, which typically enable rapid deployment and reduce cost," according to Claroty's post. "Usually, they also offer white-labeled solutions that large-scale companies can purchase to have their own personal cloud while the underlying software is exactly the same. Thus, finding bugs in one instance could mean that all other instances would be affected, too."

In addition to the critical bug, other flaws found in GateManager include CVE-2020-14508, an off-by-one error, which may allow an attacker to remotely execute arbitrary code or cause a denial-of-service condition. Another (CVE-2020-14510) arises from the use of a hard-coded credential for telnet, allowing an unprivileged attacker to execute commands as root. And CVE-2020-14512 is due to a weak hash type, which may allow an attacker to view user passwords.

Secomea issued patches on July 16 (in GateManager versions [9.2c](#) / [9.2i](#)).

Meanwhile, a stack-based overflow vulnerability, is present in the Moxa EDR-G902/3 industrial VPN server (CVE-2020-14511). This product is meant to provide a secure connection between remote industrial sites and a main data center where the SCADA/data collection server is located.

"Exploiting this security flaw, an attacker could use a specially crafted HTTP request to trigger a stack-based overflow in the system web server and carry out remote code execution without the need for any credentials," according to the writeup. "An attacker can provide a large cookie and trigger a stack-based overflow in the system."

Moxa made a patch available on June 9; users should update EDR-G902/3 to version v5.5 by applying the respective firmware updates available for the [EDR-G902 series](#) and [EDR-G903 series](#), the vendor said. And finally, a critical stack-buffer overflow (CVE-2020-14498) is present in the eWon product by HMS Networks.

eWon is a VPN device that allows machine builders and factory owners to remotely monitor the performance of their equipment. Remote clients can connect to it using a proprietary VPN client on their computer, named eCatcher, which is where the vulnerability lies.

"The bug can be exploited to achieve remote code execution [on a target's computer] by [convincing a user to visit] a malicious website or [open] a malicious email which contains a specifically crafted HTML element which is able to trigger the vulnerability in eCatcher," explained Claroty researchers.

Gaining control of an authorized user's computer grants attackers access to that user's VPN credentials, which they can then use to expand their foothold within an organization's internal network.

In a proof-of-concept exploit, researchers showed that sending socially engineered emails embedded with specifically crafted images could trigger the vulnerability if the user simply opened and viewed the email. An attacker would then have the highest privileges and be able to completely take over a victim's machine.

"The exploitation phase occurs immediately when the email client (e.g. Outlook) is loading the malicious images," according to the post.

HMS Networks issued a patch on July 14 in eCatcher [version 6.5.5](#).

ICS in the Crosshairs

Industrial installations have been ramping up in terms of adversary interest of late. Last week, the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) [issued an alert](#) warning that cybercriminals could be targeting critical infrastructure across the U.S.

And separately, ICS-CERT issued an advisory on a critical security bug in the Schneider Electric Triconex TriStation and Tricon Communication Module. These safety instrumented system (SIS) controllers are responsible for shutting down plant operations in the event of a problem and act as an automated safety defense for industrial facilities, designed to prevent equipment failure and catastrophic incidents such as explosions or fire. They've been targeted in the past, in the [TRITON attack of 2017](#).

"We expect that in the COVID-19 reality of working from home, the increased use of [VPN] platforms will drive increased interest both from the operational side, as they become more process-critical, and from the security side, as they become more common," according to Claroty. The researchers added, "Denial-of-service attacks on these components of the enterprise infrastructure could potentially emerge as a new tactic used by financially motivated attackers."

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HEADLINE	07/30 Official: Chinese hackers targeted Moderna
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-moderna-cyber-excl/exclusive-chinese-backed-hackers-targeted-covid-19-vaccine-firm-moderna-idUSKCN24V38M
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Chinese government-linked hackers targeted biotech company Moderna Inc, a leading U.S.-based coronavirus vaccine research developer, earlier this year in a bid to steal valuable data, according to a U.S. security official tracking Chinese hacking activity.</p> <p>Last week, the U.S. Justice Department made public an indictment of two Chinese nationals accused of spying on the United States, including three unnamed U.S.-based targets involved in medical research to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. The indictment states the Chinese hackers "conducted reconnaissance" against the computer network of a Massachusetts biotech firm known to be working on a coronavirus vaccine in January.</p> <p>Moderna, which is based in Massachusetts and announced its COVID-19 vaccine candidate in January, confirmed to Reuters that the company had been in contact with the FBI and was made aware of the suspected "information reconnaissance activities" by the hacking group mentioned in last week's indictment.</p> <p>Reconnaissance activities can include a wide range of actions, including probing public websites for vulnerabilities to scouting out important accounts after entering a network, cybersecurity experts say.</p> <p>"Moderna remains highly vigilant to potential cybersecurity threats, maintaining an internal team, external support services and good working relationships with outside authorities to continuously assess threats and protect our valuable information," spokesman Ray Jordan said, declining to provide further detail.</p> <p>The U.S. security official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, did not provide further details. The FBI and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declined to disclose the identities of companies targeted by Chinese hackers.</p> <p>Moderna's vaccine candidate is one of the earliest and biggest bets by the Trump administration to fight the pandemic. The federal government is supporting development of the company's vaccine with nearly half a billion dollars and helping Moderna launch a clinical trial of up to 30,000 people beginning this month.</p> <p>China is also racing to develop a vaccine, bringing together its state, military and private sectors to combat a disease that has killed over 660,000 people worldwide.</p>

A July 7 indictment released last week alleges that the two Chinese hackers, Li Xiaoyu and Dong Jiazhi, conducted a decade-long hacking spree that most recently included the targeting of COVID-19 medical research groups.

Prosecutors said Li and Dong acted as contractors for China's Ministry of State Security, a state intelligence agency. Messages left with several accounts registered under Li's digital alias, oro0lxy, were not returned. Contact details for Dong were not available.

The Chinese Embassy in Washington referred Reuters to recent Chinese Foreign Ministry comments that said: "China has long been a major victim of cyber thefts and attacks" and its officials "firmly oppose and fight" such activities. The Chinese government has consistently denied any role in hacking incidents across the globe. The embassy spokesperson did not address specific questions sent via email.

The two other unnamed medical research companies mentioned in the Justice Department indictment are described as biotech companies based in California and Maryland. Prosecutors said the hackers "searched for vulnerabilities" and "conducted reconnaissance" against them.

The court filing describes the California firm as working on antiviral drug research and suggested the Maryland company had publicly announced efforts to develop a vaccine in January. Two companies that could match those descriptions: Gilead Sciences Inc and Novavax Inc .

Gilead spokesperson Chris Ridley said the firm does not comment on cybersecurity matters. Novavax would not comment on specific cyber security activities but said: "Our cyber security team has been alerted to the alleged foreign threats identified in the news."

A security consultant familiar with multiple hacking investigations involving premier biotech firms over the last year said Chinese hacking groups believed to be broadly associated with China's Ministry of State security are one of the primary forces targeting COVID-19 research, globally. This matches the description of the indicted hackers, as MSS contractors.

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HEADLINE	07/30 EU first-ever cyberattack sanctions
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/eu-cyber-sanctions-hits-russian-intelligence-72078467
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS -- The European Union on Thursday slapped sanctions on six people and three organizations, including Russia's military intelligence agency, accusing them of responsibility for several cyber-attacks that threatened EU interests.</p> <p>EU headquarters said in a statement that those targeted include people considered to be involved in the 2017 "WannaCry" ransomware attack, the "NotPetya" strike that notably caused havoc in Ukraine, and the "Operation Cloud Hopper" hacking campaign.</p> <p>The sanctions are the first that the EU has ever imposed for cyber-attacks.</p> <p>EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said that "the measures concerned are a travel ban and asset freeze to natural persons and an asset freeze to entities or bodies. It is also prohibited to directly or indirectly make funds available to listed individuals and entities or bodies."</p> <p>Four members of Russia's GRU military intelligence agency were singled out. The EU accuses them of trying to hack the wifi network of the Netherlands-based Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, or OPCW, which has probed the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The 2018 attack was foiled by Dutch authorities.</p>

	<p>Two Chinese nationals were also targeted over “Operation Cloud Hopper,” which the EU said hit IT systems in companies on six continents, including Europe, and “gained unauthorized access to commercially sensitive data, resulting in significant economic loss.”</p> <p>A leading U.S. cybersecurity expert said the GRU attempt to hack the OPCW involved a physical visit to the organization's facilities in The Hague.</p> <p>“The consistent use of physical human intelligence teams to supplement its intrusion efforts makes the GRU a particularly effective adversary,” said John Hultquist, senior director of analysis at Mandiant Threat Intelligence.</p> <p>"Sanctions may be particularly effective for disrupting this activity as they may hinder the free movement of this unit," he said.</p> <p>Hultquist said NotPetya and WannaCry were “two of the most devastating cyberattacks in history, causing billions of dollars in damaging and disrupting many vital systems.”</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	07/31 Afghan president: Taliban prisoners in jail
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/afghan-president-400-taliban-prisoners-remain-custody-72098145
GIST	<p>KABUL, Afghanistan -- Afghan President Ashraf Ghani dashed hopes Friday for a start to negotiations with Taliban insurgents, announcing the final 400 Taliban prisoners whose release is a prerequisite to start talks, will remain jailed. The announcement frustrates U.S. efforts to find an end to Afghanistan’s years of relentless war.</p> <p>Addressing the nation on the Muslim holy day of Eid ul Adha, Ghani said the 400 Taliban are convicted of crimes he has no authority to forgive. Instead, he will call a loya jirga — or traditional grand council of elders — to decide whether they should go free. He said the council would meet “shortly.”</p> <p>Ghani's announcement was certain to delay the start of negotiations between the warring sides and frustrate Washington's efforts to bring an early end to hostilities, even as they scale down their presence in Afghanistan.</p> <p>It also comes at the start of a three-day cease-fire announced by the Taliban for the Eid holidays.</p> <p>The prisoner releases were part of a deal the United States signed in February with the Taliban aimed at ending Afghanistan's endless wars and sending U.S. troops home after nearly 20 years in Afghanistan, ending America's longest war.</p> <p>That deal, touted at the time as Afghanistan's best chance at peace in four decades, called for the Afghan government to free 5,000 Taliban held in jails across the country and the Taliban to free 1,000 government and military personnel. The releases were to be a sign of good will and a prerequisite to the start of negotiations between the warring sides.</p> <p>On Thursday, the Taliban concluded the release of the 1,000 they were holding, according to Taliban's political spokesman Suhail Shaheen. He also said the insurgent group was ready to hold talks with Kabul's political leadership within a week if the remaining Taliban still in jails in Afghanistan were freed.</p> <p>But Shaheen told The Associated Press the Taliban would not accept substitutes to the 5,000 Taliban on the list agreed upon during the one-and-a-half years of negotiations with Washington.</p>

Ghani in his speech said his government would free 500 Taliban who are not on the list saying it was a gesture of good will.

In response to Ghani's announcement, Shaheen called his administration "an obstacle to peace."

Shaheen told The Associated Press the Taliban freed 1,005 government personnel, militia members, military personnel and police. The last of the prisoners was freed Thursday.

"We freed all of them as a good will gesture so that they may pass their Eid days with their families and also we announced the cease-fire in order to create a conducive atmosphere for the start of intra-Afghan negotiations," Shaheen said. "But on the other hand the head of the Kabul administration, instead of removing hurdles in the way of peace and intra-Afghan negotiations, is creating ... hurdles and obstacles."

The U.N. had expressed hopes for a start to negotiations within weeks, suggesting they may have begun in July, and called on both sides not to squander an opportunity at peace.

The U.S. Embassy in Kabul on Thursday issued a statement at the end of Khalilzad's round of meetings with Afghan leaders in the capital repeating a call for an end to fighting and bloodshed and urged both sides to "seize this historic opportunity for peace."

A meeting of the loya jirga would require weeks to collect elders from throughout the country and it wasn't clear how they would be chosen or whether Ghani's political opponent and the current head of the High Council for National Reconciliation Abdullah Abdullah supported the move.

Abdullah was tasked with overseeing the peace talks with the Taliban as part of a power sharing deal with Ghani earlier this year following disputed presidential election results.

There was no immediate comment from Abdullah to Ghani's refusal to release the remaining Taliban prisoners.

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HEADLINE	07/30 Convicted 1993 NYC terror plot released
SOURCE	https://nypost.com/2020/07/30/victor-alvarez-conspirator-in-1993-nyc-terror-plot-set-for-release/
GIST	<p>A would-be terrorist convicted in a fiendish plot to bomb New York City landmarks was released to a Manhattan homeless shelter on Thursday — after declaring in court that he would stop taking his meds.</p> <p>"I want to be free from mental health treatment," Victor Alvarez loudly told his lawyer during an afternoon court appearance.</p> <p>"I want to be free now."</p> <p>Alvarez, 54, was ordered fitted with an electronic monitoring bracelet by a judge who also signed off on a plan for him to move into the Bellevue Men's Shelter in Kips Bay once the device is attached.</p> <p>He arrived at the shelter in the rear seat of an SUV around 3:30 p.m. and was escorted by two federal probation officers who had been present in court.</p> <p>Alvarez — whose long, scraggly white beard was partly covered by a cloth mask — declined to answer questions from The Post as he headed inside, carrying a backpack and a gray suit jacket on a hanger.</p> <p>Alvarez on Thursday finished serving a 30-year prison sentence for conspiring with the late, blind Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman to blow up the various Big Apple bridges and tunnels, as well as the United Nations and local FBI headquarters.</p>

His crimes included helping stir diesel fuel and fertilizer for what the feds called a “witches’ brew” that was found inside a makeshift bomb factory in Queens when it was raided in 1993, disrupting the terror scheme.

Manhattan federal Judge Vernon Broderick agreed with prosecutors to impose the electronic monitoring and other restrictions on Alvarez, based in part on what court papers called the “documented mental health issues” that “contributed to [his] radicalization and violent behavior.”

“These issues continued to contribute to violent and disruptive behavior when the defendant was incarcerated,” prosecutors wrote.

“Between 1993 and 2013, the defendant received 155 prison disciplinary reports, including for assaulting, spitting on, and threatening officers, possessing a weapon, flooding his cell, and keeping containers of urine and rotten milk in his cell.”

Alvarez’s mental state improved after he began being “involuntarily medicated” in 2013, but Alvarez “has told prison doctors that he does not intend to continue taking psychiatric medication upon his release from prison,” prosecutors wrote.

In court on Thursday, Alvarez said he wanted to speak directly to the judge, but was told by Broderick to confer with his defense attorney instead.

Alvarez then turned to court-appointed lawyer Carla Sanderson and announced he planned to end his treatment.

Sanderson briefly argued against the restrictions sought by prosecutors — which also include a “risk assessment and mental health evaluation,” and mandatory participation in a “deradicalization program” — but was quickly overruled by the judge.

Alvarez was among nine followers of Abdel-Rahman who were found guilty along with him in 1995 following a nine-month trial that included audio and video recordings secretly made with the help of a turncoat bodyguard for the radical Islamic preacher.

In addition to planning a day of attacks as part of a “jihad” or holy war against the US, they were also convicted of conspiring with the terrorists who bombed the World Trade Center in 1993.

In court papers filed earlier this month, prosecutors initially sought to have Alvarez sent to a halfway house for his first year of freedom.

But they modified that request on Tuesday, saying he could instead submit a plan for approval by the US Probation Office to live in a “residence, which may include a shelter.”

Under the restrictions approved by Broderick, if Alvarez is kicked out “for failing to abide by shelter rules or for his misbehavior,” he can be ordered into a halfway house for up to a year and only allowed out for “work, healthcare appointments, religious observances or other acceptable reasons as approved by Probation,” court papers say.

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HEADLINE	07/30 Belarus: Russians plotted terror attacks
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/belarus-accuses-russian-contractors-plotting-terror-acts-72071122
GIST	MINSK, Belarus -- Belarusian authorities on Thursday accused more than 30 detained Russians of plotting terror attacks amid a presidential election campaign, allegations that Russian officials angrily rejected.

The grave accusations mark an unprecedented spike in tensions between Russia and Belarus, which are neighbors and traditionally allies. Independent observers and opposition supporters in Belarus have dismissed the alleged terror plot as a campaign stunt by President Alexander Lukashenko, the authoritarian leader who is seeking a sixth term in next month's election.

The Belarusian State Security Committee, still known by its Soviet-era name KGB, said it detained 32 people from private Russian military firm Wagner early Wednesday at a sanitarium outside the capital of Minsk. Another person was detained in the country's south.

Security Council Secretary Andrei Ravkov said Thursday that the Russians are facing a criminal probe on charges of plotting terror attacks in Belarus. He claimed that Belarusian authorities were searching for another 200 Russian "militants" believed to be in the ex-Soviet nation.

The Kremlin responded by urging Belarus to explain its action and to fully respect the detainees' rights.

"There is no information about any wrongdoing of the Russians that may have caused the detention.," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. He shrugged off the allegations of the Russians' involvement in efforts to destabilize Belarus as "nothing but innuendo."

After being summoned by the Belarusian Foreign Ministry, Russian Ambassador Dmitry Mezentsev also dismissed the accusations as unfounded. He said the Russians were en route to an unspecified country and checked into the sanitarium near Minsk after they missed a connecting flight at the capital's airport.

Mezentsev demanded immediate consular access to the detainees and urged Belarusian authorities to show their evidence against the Russians.

The Wagner company is linked to Yevgeny Prigozhin, a Russian businessman who was indicted in the United States for meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. The firm has allegedly deployed hundreds of military contractors to eastern Ukraine, Syria and Libya.

Many observers have pointed out that Belarus long has provided a transit corridor for sensitive Russian operations abroad.

Lukashenko is campaigning to remain in office amid an upsurge in opposition protests fueled by public fatigue with his iron-fisted rule and a painful economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic. Some observers see the detention of the Russians as an attempt by the president to mobilize public support in the Aug. 9 election.

"Amid a sharp drop in his popularity, Lukashenko has to turn to theatrical gestures to scare everyone and to try to stem the wave of protests," Alexander Klaskovsky, an independent political analyst based in Minsk, said.

Throughout his 26-year rule, Lukashenko has relied on cheap Russian energy and loans to keep his nation's Soviet-style economy afloat. Belarus and Russia have a union deal envisaging close political, economic and military ties, but Moscow has recently cut some of the subsidies, arguing that Belarus must accept closer integration to receive energy resources at a discount.

The Belarusian leader has bristled at Russian demands and accused the Kremlin of harboring plans to deprive Belarus of its post-Soviet independence.

"The new scandals help remind the Kremlin that it needs to pay for loyalty," Klaskovsky said.

Belarus' Investigative Committee said Thursday it was also investigating whether the detained Russians could have been involved in preparations for staging "mass riots" as part of a criminal probe against a jailed opposition blogger, Sergei Tikhanovsky. He has been in custody since May on charges of attacking a police officer, which he rejected as a provocation

	<p>Tikhanovsky's wife, Svetlana, who is challenging Lukashenko in the election, dismissed the new accusations against her husband as "absolutely unlawful." Election officials rejected attempts by two other potential presidential challengers to register for the race.</p> <p>Over 20,000 Tikhanovskaya's supporters gathered Thursday at her rally in Minsk, the biggest since the start of the campaign. Many participants dismissed the official claims of a Russian subversion plot as a sham.</p> <p>"We are worried about the lack of money to buy food and medicines, not some mythical enemies and plots," retiree Nikolai Ostapchuk, 72, said.</p> <p>"No one believes in these thriller stories about Russian militants, which are intended to switch our attention, scare us and keep us at home," said 43-year-old driver Dmitry Furkovsky.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 Afghan officials: suicide bomber kills 9
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/afghan-officials-suicide-bomber-kills-people-wounds-30-72083162
GIST	<p>KABUL, Afghanistan -- A suicide bombing in Afghanistan's eastern Logar province late on Thursday killed at least nine people and wounded at least 40, authorities said.</p> <p>The attack struck in the provincial capital of Pul-e-Alam and targeted a police checkpoint. Interior Ministry spokesman Tariq Arian initially said most of the victims were civilians but later, he said six of the dead were policemen and three were civilians.</p> <p>Many of the wounded however were civilians, he added. Provincial police spokesman Shahpoor Ahmadzai said the civilian casualties were mainly in cars that had stopped at the checkpoint for a security check.</p> <p>There were conflicting reports about the casualty figures, with a provincial council chief saying he had reports of as many as 15 deaths. There was no immediate explanation for the discrepancy.</p> <p>At the hospital where the victims were brought to, witnesses reported seeing several children who had been hurt in the bombing. The witnesses asked their names not be used because of fears of retaliation.</p> <p>The Taliban promptly denied responsibility for the attack, which came on the eve of the major Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha and a three-day cease-fire that has been declared for the occasion by the Taliban.</p> <p>Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the cease-fire remained on track and was set to go into effect at midnight. He blamed the attack on "those intelligence circles that want the continuation of war in Afghanistan," without elaborating.</p> <p>Efforts to get peace talks between the insurgents and the Kabul government underway have stalled after the Taliban and the U.S. signed a deal in February, seen as a blueprint to ending Afghanistan's decades of war.</p> <p>The Islamic State group's affiliate for Afghanistan also operates in the region but did not immediately claim responsibility for the bombing. The militant group has stepped up its attacks lately. The U.S. blamed IS for a brutal attack in May on a maternity hospital in the Afghan capital, Kabul, that killed 24 people, including newborn infants.</p> <p>Muslims around the world will be celebrating Eid al-Adha or "Feast of the Sacrifice," for three days, stating Friday. This most important Islamic holiday marks the willingness of the Prophet Ibrahim — Abraham to Christians and Jews — to sacrifice his son as an act of obedience to God.</p>

HEADLINE	07/30 Concern: Taliban w/anti-tank weapons
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/30/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban-helicopter-missile.html?action=click&module=Latest&pgtype=Homepage
GIST	<p>An Afghan helicopter was attacked in the country's south this week by what United States and Afghan officials say was a missile rarely seen in the hands of the Taliban, raising new concerns for a beleaguered Afghan military and questions about who supplied the weapon.</p> <p>On Monday, a Black Hawk helicopter was returning from a medical evacuation mission in Helmand Province and was preparing to land. It is unclear if the helicopter had touched down or was hovering just feet off the ground when it was struck by an anti-tank guided missile, American and Afghan officials said. At least two of the crew members aboard were wounded, one critically.</p> <p>It was the second attack of its kind this year. In January, another Afghan helicopter was hit by an anti-tank guided missile in the same area near the Kajaki Dam, a swath of territory long contested by the Taliban, the officials said. Initial reports at the time were inconclusive about what had struck the helicopter.</p> <p>American and Afghan officials claim the weapons used in both strikes were most likely supplied by Iran, but they offered no evidence to support the assertion. The accusation would be alarming if true, as the influx of anti-tank guided missiles could not only give the Taliban a tactical advantage over the Afghan military but also suggest Tehran was trying to undermine the American mission as it is poised to wind down. Iran has denied supplying weapons to the Taliban.</p> <p>Anti-tank guided missiles, which come in many variants, are common in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, having been captured from military bases and supplied by countries such as the United States, Russia and Iran. But the weapons have been rare in Afghanistan, U.S. military officials said.</p> <p>In the 1980s, the C.I.A.-backed program that funneled arms and supplies to Afghan insurgents fighting the Soviet Union provided a cache of anti-tank guided missiles. And in 2008, the Taliban captured at least one missile and its launcher from the French.</p> <p>In 2017, Osprey Flight Solutions, a private company that assesses threats to commercial aviation in conflict zones, tracked a shipment of the weapons into Afghanistan from Pakistan.</p> <p>"Existing evidence suggests that acquisition and use of portable anti-tank missiles by armed groups in Afghanistan is limited, especially in comparison to places like Syria," Matthew Schroeder, a senior researcher for the Small Arms Survey, which tracks the prevalence of anti-tank guided missiles and other weapons in war zones, said on Thursday.</p> <p>Anti-tank guided missiles require training and multiple people to effectively fire them; for the most part, they are unwieldy. But they are capable of accurately hitting a target from kilometers away — well outside the range of small-arms fire — making them dangerous to vehicles, outposts and stationary aircraft. That makes their potential emergence in Afghanistan especially troubling for the Afghan military, which fights its battles mostly from checkpoints.</p> <p>Shooting at helicopters that are on or near the ground, such as the two incidents in Helmand Province this year, is a tactic that has been used often by insurgent groups during the conflict in Syria.</p> <p>Afghanistan's defense ministry said in a statement soon after the attack this week that the Black Hawk had crashed "due to technical issues while it was attempting to land." In the days since, security officials admitted privately that the aircraft was attacked.</p> <p>One senior Afghan security official said it was near certain that the helicopter had been hit by an anti-tank missile, but an investigating team was sent to the Kajaki district on Tuesday to explore further. A second</p>

senior official said he was unaware of this kind of weapon being deployed against aircraft in Afghanistan beyond the two incidents in Helmand Province this year.

“Based on what I heard from locals, the helicopter was shot by the Taliban,” said Attaullah Afghan, the head of the provincial council in Helmand. “The Taliban have got new weapons that they can use against helicopters when it’s on the ground — a kind of rocket attached to long wire used against tanks and helicopters. A similar weapon was used against another aircraft that had landed in Kajaki.”

While Iranian officials have acknowledged their diplomatic channels with the Taliban, they have repeatedly rejected accusations in recent years of providing material support to the group. They say they support the Afghan government in resisting the Taliban’s quest for a return of their Islamic Emirate, which was hostile to neighboring Iran.

“What is important is that we believe in preserving the current constitution and the political system, we support the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the government,” Abbas Araghchi, Iran’s deputy foreign minister, said in a recent interview with the Afghan channel ToloNews. “Unlike other countries, we haven’t come to give weapons or money to the Taliban.”

In January, after a U.S. drone strike in Iraq killed Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani, a top Iranian military officer, many Afghan officials, including the country’s president, Ashraf Ghani, were worried that Iran would use its reach in Afghanistan’s messy battlefield to retaliate against the Americans and intensify the Afghan conflict. Around the time of Mr. Ghani’s inauguration in March, a series of rocket attacks similar to those launched by Iranian-backed militias in Iraq seemed to amplify the officials’ concerns. One hit an area around the presidential palace.

Images from the attack on Monday, verified by a U.S. military officer familiar with the incident, show the burning U.S.-supplied Black Hawk along with a bundle of guiding wire, a distinct feature on some types of anti-tank guided missiles.

For the duration of the war, U.S. military intelligence officers have repeatedly made claims of weapons and supplies flowing from Pakistan, Iran, Russia and other Central Asian countries to the Taliban, but often with little proof. American officials have closely tracked the appearance of surface-to-air missiles and other threats to aircraft, as any type of foreign involvement with such types of weapons would be contentious and substantially increase the risk to American and Afghan forces.

Since anti-tank guided missiles are not designed to specifically target aircraft, their introduction to the conflict is less likely to draw significant condemnation from the Americans, the U.S. military officer said, though it would certainly be an escalation. The United States provided such weapons to Syrian opposition fighters in 2014 and portable surface-to-air missiles to Islamist fighters in the 1980s.

About 60,000 Afghan security forces have been killed since 2014, when U.S. forces began drawing down. And since the beginning of the year, despite a peace agreement between the United States and the Taliban in February, Afghan troops and civilians continue to suffer heavy losses.

Speaking at an event in Kabul on Tuesday, Mr. Ghani said 3,560 Afghan forces had been killed and nearly 6,800 others wounded since the deal between the United States and the Taliban. The casualties are possibly higher, some Afghan officials suggested, with many doubting that the number included the losses of pro-government militias who bear the brunt of the fighting. And from Jan. 1 to June 30, 1,282 civilians were killed and 2,176 were wounded, according to a United Nations report released on Monday.

On Tuesday, after weeks of deadly attacks on Afghan forces, the Taliban announced a three-day cease-fire for the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha. The announcement came soon after Mr. Ghani said a prisoner swap that had faced opposition from his government would be completed and that direct negotiations with the Taliban would start in a week.

	<p>But the violence continued right up to the time of the cease-fire, with a car bomb detonating at a crowded roundabout in Pul e Alam, a city about 40 miles south of Kabul. Officials said the target was a security convoy, but the 15 people killed and 30 wounded were a mix of civilians and military.</p> <p>Under the deal between the United States and the Taliban, which initiated the phased withdrawal of American troops, direct peace negotiations between the Afghan sides were conditioned on swapping 5,000 Taliban prisoners with 1,000 Afghan security forces held by the insurgents.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	07/30 Police: 18yr-old disappearance suspicious
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/detectives-searching-for-18-year-old-maple-valley-woman-call-her-disappearance-suspicious/
GIST	<p>Detectives searching for an 18-year-old Maple Valley woman who vanished last week are now calling her disappearance suspicious and are asking for the public's help in looking for her.</p> <p>Gia Fuda's parents said they last saw her at dinner at their Maple Valley home Thursday evening. On Friday morning, she left the house around 8 or 9 a.m. without mentioning where she was going, although her parents said that wasn't out of the norm. When she didn't return and they hadn't heard from her by Friday night, however, they called the police.</p> <p>Fuda's car, a silver 2008 Toyota Corolla, was found on Highway 2 east of Index, Snohomish County on Saturday night by a state Department of Transportation worker, said King County Sheriff's Office spokesperson Ryan Abbott.</p> <p>Detectives later determined Fuda had run out of gas. They found her purse and wallet inside her car, but her car keys and cellphone — which had been turned off — were gone. Overnight bags she had packed for a visit with a friend were also in the car, according to the sheriff's office.</p> <p>Fuda recently graduated from Tahoma High School and was taking online classes at Bellevue College this summer, said her father, Bob Fuda. She's interested in studying psychology, he said.</p> <p>"She was getting ready to gear up for college and get the ball rolling," he said. "She has a lot of dreams ... She wanted to get her master's and the whole nine yards. She's a very driven girl."</p> <p>Her mother, Kristin Fuda, said her daughter is very social and outgoing, and she loves hiking, going to coffee shops and playing sports — she has played soccer for most of her life, and more recently she took up basketball and volleyball.</p> <p>"Highway 2 is a pretty heavily traveled road," Fuda's father said. "Somebody had to see her ... Somebody knows something. And God forbid if somebody got her, just let her go."</p> <p>A King County Search and Rescue team, along with Fuda's family, will continue their ground search Friday.</p> <p>Sheriff detectives are asking anyone with dashcam video from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday on Highway 2 to contact them at 206-296-3311.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 Seattle roads among worst in nation
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/local/transportation/slideshow/seattle-roads-highways-worst-in-nation-study-206055.php

GIST	<p>From the West Seattle Bridge cracking after just 36 years in use to what seems like endless potholes in Capitol Hill, most Seattle drivers know that the city's roads aren't always the smoothest.</p> <p>Deteriorating roads in metropolitan areas due to increased vehicle traffic has become a nationwide trend, with the Federal Highway Administration estimating that 26% of major urban roads in the U.S. are in poor condition. The data is significant, especially when considering that Americans spend \$3 billion annually in car repairs for pothole damage alone according to AAA.</p> <p>And drivers in the Emerald City might be spending more than most on vehicle repairs as a new study from Copilot found that 44.2% of all major roads in the city are in poor condition, the 6th highest of any major metro in the country.</p> <p>The report found a large trend of West Coast cities having roads in poor condition, with cities in California claiming the top three spots for metros with the worst roads.</p> <p>Less traffic on the roads due to the COVID-19 pandemic and more people telecommuting has accelerated construction efforts on Interstate 90 and U.S. 520.</p> <p>However, the report shows that Seattle's freeways aren't the roads in need of the most repair.</p> <p>Only 12.5% of interstates and highways in the city are in poor condition, a stark contrast to the 44.3% of major arterials and 51.6% of minor arterials in poor condition.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 Case study in aerosol transmission
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/30/health/diamond-princess-coronavirus-aerosol.html?action=click&module=Well&pgtype=Homepage&section=Health
GIST	<p>In a year of endless viral outbreaks, the details of the Diamond Princess tragedy seem like ancient history. On Jan. 20, one infected passenger boarded the cruise ship; a month later, more than 700 of the 3,711 passengers and crew members had tested positive, with many falling seriously ill. The invader moved as swiftly and invisibly as the perpetrators on Agatha Christie's Orient Express, leaving doctors and health officials with only fragmentary evidence to sift through.</p> <p>Ever since, scientists have tried to pin down exactly how the coronavirus spread throughout the ship. And for good reason: The Diamond Princess' outbreak remains perhaps the most valuable case study available of coronavirus transmission — an experiment-in-a-bottle, rich in data, as well as a dark warning for what was to come in much of the world.</p> <p>Now, researchers are beginning to use macroscopic tools — computer models, which have revealed patterns in the virus's global spread — to clarify the much smaller-scale questions that currently dominate public discussions of safety: How, exactly, does the virus move through a community, a building or a small group of people? Which modes of transmission should concern us most, and how might we stop them?</p> <p>In a new report, a research team based at Harvard and the Illinois Institute of Technology has tried to tease out the ways in which the virus passed from person to person in the staterooms, corridors and common areas of the Diamond Princess. It found that the virus spread most readily in microscopic droplets that were light enough to float in the air, for several minutes or much longer.</p> <p>The new findings add to an escalating debate among doctors, scientists and health officials about the primary routes of coronavirus transmission. Earlier this month, after pressure from more than 200 scientists, the World Health Organization acknowledged that the virus could linger in the air indoors, potentially causing new infections. Previously, it had emphasized only large droplets, as from coughing,</p>

and infected surfaces as the primary drivers of transmission. Many clinicians and epidemiologists continue to argue that these routes are central to disease progression.

The new paper has been posted on a preprint server and submitted to a journal; it has not yet been peer-reviewed, but it was shown by Times reporters to nearly a dozen experts in aerosols and infectious disease. The new findings, if confirmed, would have major implications for making indoor spaces safer and choosing among a panoply of personal protective gear.

For example, ventilation systems that “turn over” or replace the air in a room or building as often as possible, preferably drawing on external air to do so, should make indoor spaces healthier. But good ventilation is not enough; the Diamond Princess was well ventilated and the air did not recirculate, the researchers noted. So wearing good-quality masks — standard surgical masks, or cloth masks with multiple layers rather than just one — will most likely be needed as well, even in well-ventilated spaces where people are keeping their distance.

The computer modeling adds a new dimension of support to an accumulating body of evidence implicating small, airborne droplets in multiple outbreaks, including at [a Chinese restaurant](#), a [choir in Washington State](#), as well as [a recent study](#) at a Nebraska hospital to which 13 passengers from the Diamond Princess had been evacuated.

One researcher not involved in the new work, Julian Tang, an honorary associate professor of respiratory sciences at the University of Leicester in the United Kingdom, said the paper was “the first attempt, as far as I know, to formally compare the different routes of coronavirus transmission, especially of short versus long-range aerosols.”

He characterized the distances and the kinds of particles involved with a simple analogy from everyday life: “If you can smell what I had for lunch, you’re getting my air, and you can be getting virus particles as well.”

Another researcher, Linsey Marr, a professor of civil and environmental engineering at Virginia Tech who studies airborne transmission of viruses, had a more vivid description of the finding: the “garlic breath” effect.

“As you’re close to someone, you smell that garlic breath,” Dr. Marr said. “As you’re farther away, you don’t smell it.”

The “garlic breath” effect would suggest that powerful ventilation in buildings — primarily using outside air, or very well filtered — could reduce the transmission of the virus. The study found that small particles also had some ability to spread it at longer distances, presumably beyond the range of breath odor.

From the start of the pandemic, scientists have grappled with the mechanisms of coronavirus spread. Early on, surface transmission was widely emphasized; larger droplets, which travel on more ballistic trajectories, like a stone through the air, and strike mucus membranes directly, are now favored by a number of researchers.

Other possibilities are candidates as well, said Dr. John Conly, an infectious disease physician and infection control expert with the University of Calgary in Canada who has done consulting with the World Health Organization.

“We’re getting surprises all the way along,” Dr. Conly said. “This paper I find interesting, but it has a long way to go to be able to get into a line of credibility, in my mind.”

Dr. George Rutherford, a professor of epidemiology at the University of California, San Francisco, was equally skeptical. He said that, outside of hospital settings, “large droplets in my mind account for the vast majority of cases. Aerosols transmission — if you really run with that, it creates lots of dissonance. Are there situations where it could occur? Yeah maybe, but it’s a tiny amount.”

Dr. Tang and other scientists strongly disagree. “If I’m talking to an infectious person for 15 or 20 minutes and inhaling some of their air,” Dr. Tang said, “isn’t that a much simpler way to explain transmission than touching an infected surface and touching your eyes? When you’re talking about an outbreak, like at a restaurant, that latter seems like a torturous way to explain transmission.”

In the new analysis, a team led by Parham Azimi, an indoor-air researcher at Harvard’s T.H. Chan School of Public Health, studied the outbreak on the Diamond Princess, where physical spaces and infections were well documented. It ran more than 20,000 simulations of how the virus might have spread throughout the ship. Each simulation made a variety of assumptions, about factors like patterns of social interaction — how much time people spent in their cabins, on deck or in the cafeteria, on average — and the amount of time the virus can live on surfaces. Each also factored in varying contributions of smaller, floating droplets, broadly defined as 10 microns or smaller; and larger droplets, which fall more quickly and infect surfaces or other people, by landing on their eyes, mouth or nose, say.

About 130 of those simulations reproduced, to some extent, what actually happened on the Diamond Princess as the outbreak progressed. By analyzing these most “realistic” scenarios, the research team calculated the most likely contributions of each route of transmission. The researchers concluded that the smaller droplets predominated, and accounted for about 60 percent of new infections over all, both at close range, within a few yards of an infectious person, and at greater distances.

“Many people have argued that airborne transmission is happening, but no one had numbers for it,” Dr. Azimi said. “What is the contribution from these small droplets — is it 5 percent, or 90 percent? In this paper, we provide the first real estimates for what that number could be, at least in the case of this cruise ship.”

The logic behind such transmission is straightforward, experts said. When a person is speaking, he or she emits a cloud of droplets, the vast majority of which are small enough to remain suspended in the air for a few minutes or longer. Through inhalation, that cloud of small droplets is more likely to reach a mucus membrane than larger ones soaring ballistically.

The smaller droplets are also more likely to penetrate deeply into the respiratory system, down to the lungs. It may take a much smaller viral load — fewer viruses — to cause infection in the lungs than higher up, such as in the throat. This, at least, is the case for other respiratory viruses, like the flu.

Brent Stephens, an engineering professor at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago and a co-author on the paper, said the findings were important in shaping, for example, measures that should be taken as college students return to campus.

The first, he said, should be “really enforcing mask policies.” Another, he said, is to recognize that there is a “huge variability in mask quality,” and material that actually stops small aerosols when someone is breathing, speaking, coughing or sneezing is crucial. Surgical masks are good, he said, but single-ply fabrics often are not.

As various transmission routes come into clearer focus, they will provide specific guidelines on how to reopen schools, offices, restaurants and other businesses.

“The value of this model is that it allows for recommendations and guidance to be specific to each unique environment,” said another co-author, Joseph G. Allen, an expert in indoor air quality and an assistant professor at Harvard’s T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

Dr. Allen said those environments ranged from restaurants to dentist offices. In each case, he said, there are low-cost solutions that sharply improve ventilation and filtration — most buildings fall well short of optimal levels — and in turn reduce the risks of airborne infection.

	“To me, this is an all-in moment,” Dr. Allen said. “We need better ventilation and better filtration, across the board, in all our buildings.”
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HEADLINE	07/30 Mystery seeds spread around world
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/mystery-seeds-spread-around-the-world-11596119184
GIST	<p>The case of the mystery seeds showing up in U.S. mailboxes from shippers in China and other countries has gone global.</p> <p>The U.S. Department of Agriculture said consumers in at least 22 U.S. states and several other countries had received unsolicited packages of seeds. Canada, the U.K. and Australia all are investigating the matter.</p> <p>The USDA, in a recorded radio broadcast released Wednesday night, revealed the world-wide scope of the seed shipments after thousands of people across the U.S. have reported receiving seeds in the mail they didn't order. States from Washington to Virginia have warned residents about the unsolicited packages, and the USDA said earlier this week that it is collecting the packages and will test seeds inside for anything of concern.</p> <p>Unsolicited seed packages have been on the USDA's radar since at least early June, according to state agriculture officials. Gary Black, Georgia's commissioner of agriculture, said his department contacted USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service after a handful of state residents reported receiving such deliveries around June 2. No further packages were reported in Georgia until late last week, he said.</p> <p>Osama El-Lissy, a deputy administrator for USDA's APHIS, said the agency has so far identified 14 different species of seeds, from mustard and morning glory to cabbage, rosemary and roses.</p> <p>As of late Wednesday, there is no indication any of the seeds carry pests or diseases, according to the USDA. Seeds analyzed by the USDA so far have been identified as both horticultural and weed seeds, according to state agricultural officials briefed on the agency's preliminary findings.</p> <p>USDA also reiterated it has no evidence the packages are something other than a “brushing scam.” In such scams, e-commerce vendors on online retailers like Amazon.com Inc. pay “brushers” to place orders for vendors' products, and packages with low-value or no contents are shipped to strangers. Brushers then pose as the buyers and post fake customer reviews to boost the vendor's sales.</p> <p>Multiple federal agencies are now investigating the seeds, from the Federal Bureau of Investigation to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection.</p> <p>“These appear to be delayed packages due to Covid-19, not brushing,” said a spokesperson for Amazon in a statement. The company said it is working with its sellers, customers and government agencies to address concerns. USDA didn't immediately comment.</p> <p>Some recipients of the seed packages said they never ordered seeds from the online retailing giant, or had received all the seeds they ordered before receiving the unsolicited ones.</p> <p>State agriculture officials said many people who reported receiving packages had never ordered any seeds. “Ninety-nine percent ordered no seeds,” said Sid Miller, commissioner of Texas' agriculture department.</p> <p>Mike Strain, Louisiana's commissioner of agriculture and forestry, said two FBI agents visited his department on Wednesday to survey the more than 30 seed packages they have collected so far. Representatives from USDA's Office of the Inspector General will conduct a similar survey later this week, he said. State inspectors are meanwhile working to collect hundreds more packages from Louisiana, sent from countries including China, Uzbekistan and the Solomon Islands. Other recipients say packages were sent from the United Arab Emirates and other countries.</p>

“The alphabet soup is definitely engaged,” said Logan Wilde, commissioner of the state’s Department of Agriculture and Food, adding that the FBI had requested a meeting with his department this week. An FBI representative declined to comment.

A spokesperson for the U.S. Customs and Border Protection said the agency is working closely with USDA and other agencies “to target, detect, intercept, and thereby prevent the entry of these potential threats before they have a chance to do any harm.”

The spokesperson said CBP’s agriculture specialists on a typical day last year seized 4,695 prohibited plants, meats, animal byproducts, and soils and intercepted 314 insect pests from across the country.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency this week instructed Canadians who had received such packages not to plant the seeds, while the U.K. government said it has been investigating packages of seeds marked as “ear studs” that people there received over the last month. Australia’s Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment said they were aware of the U.S. seed packages and were investigating whether the issue was occurring in Australia, a spokeswoman said.

Chinese government officials had no immediate comment. China’s Foreign Ministry earlier this week said that mailing labels on the seed packages were forged, and that China has asked the U.S. to return the packages for investigation.

State agriculture officials say they are taking the situation seriously due to concerns the seeds could be from invasive plant species that might threaten native plants and crops, or potentially introduce diseases or harm livestock.

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HEADLINE	07/30 Study: sea level rise in repeat flooding
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/flooding-will-affect-20-of-the-worlds-gdp-in-80-years/
GIST	<p>From time immemorial, human beings have settled near water. But as sea levels rise and weather becomes more extreme, that proximity is becoming a drawback, and in the years to come will put hundreds of millions of people around the globe in the path of frequent floods, new research suggests.</p> <p>By the end of the century, nearly 290 million people — equal to the population of Canada, Mexico and all of Central America combined — could be affected by repeat flooding, according to a study published Thursday in Nature. The related economic damage could be vast, equivalent to up to 20% of global GDP.</p> <p>Notably, that flooding is likely to happen whether or not the world takes action to sharply cut emissions in the coming decades, the researchers conclude. They considered two scenarios: One in which the usage of fossil fuels increase and carbon emissions continue rise, and another in which emissions peak around 2040 and then start to fall. They found a similar amount of flooding in both cases.</p> <p>"Surprisingly, the global flooding under the lower greenhouse gas case is not that much lower," Ian Young, one of the authors of the study, said in an email. That's because human activity to date has already "baked in" a certain amount of global warming. In other words, even if people were to stop burning fossil fuels tomorrow, it would take decades for carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to fall.</p> <p>"Even if we reduce the greenhouse gas level, the melting of the glaciers will continue," Young said. "This means that we are going to have to look at adaptation, irrespective of the greenhouse gas concentrations." Flooding will also become more frequent, the researchers found. "For most of the world, flooding associated with a present day, 1-in -100-year event could occur as frequently as once in 10 years, primarily as a result of sea level rise," Young said.</p> <p>Small rise, big consequences</p>

Since 1880, sea levels worldwide have [risen](#) by about 8 or 9 inches on average as humans have pumped carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Seas are widely [expected](#) to rise at least another foot by 2100, and likely more. But even a small increase in sea level is likely to have severe impacts.

"Just a little bit of sea level rise can lead to a large change in the area that gets flooded and the frequency of events," said Radley Horton, a professor at Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. Factors including tides, stronger waves, increased storm surges due to stronger storms, and higher average sea levels, all contribute to flooding. That means many coastal areas, while unlikely to be permanently submerged, will face flood risks.

Future flood zones pointed out in the Nature study include the U.S. East Coast; the coast of Europe stretching from Gibraltar to Denmark; northern Australia; southeast Asia; and the communities bordering the Yellow Sea — from Shanghai, China to Kagoshima, Japan.

Of course, flooding due to [climate change](#) isn't only a concern for the future; it's happening today. For example, in the U.S., parts of Miami now experience floods on a monthly basis, during high tides made higher by climate disruption. This is leading some residents to [seek higher ground](#), and hurting property values.

Another factor are storms, which contribute to flooding when powerful winds drive waters higher — a phenomenon known as "storm surge." Scientists expect our warmer future to have fewer, stronger storms, said John Mutter, a professor at Columbia University who studies natural disasters and development.

"Although overall it's expected that there will be fewer hurricanes in our new world, of the ones that do occur, we expect them to be stronger," he said. That means the Atlantic coast in the U.S. could in the future expect four or five intense hurricanes every season.

"We do expect storm surge issues to be more costly, more common, in the future," Mutter said.

Concentrated assets

The Nature study highlights how much valuable infrastructure is at the mercy of nature. While flood-prone areas contain, at most, only 4% of the world's human population, they hold assets equal to one-fifth of the world's economy.

"Historically, there's a tendency for a lot of our centers of innovation, expensive assets, to be concentrated along coastal areas," Horton said. "We have doubled-down — overinvested — in high-risk areas."

While no countries are doing enough to prepare for rising sea levels, according to Horton, possible solutions could take several forms. Wealthy countries could build sea walls or dams around their coastlines, such as dikes in the Netherlands, the Marina Barrage dam in Singapore and sea walls in [Japan](#).

Another approach would be to construct buildings to withstand a flood, something Horton called "accommodating the water." That could mean moving electrical equipment from building basements to higher floors, or elevating entire structures.

Finally, some communities will need to move farther from the coasts, Horton said, adding: "In some of these areas, retreating will be the only way to prevent these expensive losses."

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HEADLINE	07/30 Study: ventilation systems virus potential
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/ventilation-systems-change-spread-potential-viral-particles-indoors/story?id=72075043

GIST

A new study at the University of Minnesota College of Science and Engineering showed ventilation systems can change the spread of aerosolized and potentially virus-containing particles in common indoor areas. The study looked at results in an elevator, a supermarket and a classroom.

Although their findings are still undergoing peer review, they have caught the attention of an anxious nation gearing up to send children back to school and eager for any small hints on how to stay safe and reduce transmission indoors.

Dr. Jiarong Hong and Dr. Suo Yang, mechanical engineering associate professors at the University of Minnesota analyzed how aerosolized and potentially virus-containing particles could spread in common indoor areas using a computer simulation.

To start, they evaluated eight asymptomatic participants with COVID and calculated the particle spread from actions like talking, coughing and sneezing. They took this data and applied it into various computer simulations.

In one simulation, they created various circumstances in a standard classroom, with a teacher placed at the front and children scattered throughout the room. In other simulations, they did the same thing, but in an elevator or a grocery store. They studied various conditions, including how the spread would change if the rooms had a powerful ventilator in either the entrance or back of the room.

They found that in indoor spaces, good ventilation will filter some of the virus out of the air, but may leave more viral particles on surfaces, such as walls. Key among their findings: The aerosols spread significantly less throughout the room when the asymptomatic person was placed directly under an air vent rather than away from.

This could come into play in the classroom, with the risk of transmission theoretically lower if an unknowing asymptomatic teacher were placed directly underneath the ventilation system. Conversely, a ventilation system at the back of the room might spread potentially infectious particles throughout the room.

"If the teacher is in the front, the ventilation is in the back, the ventilation will draw the aerosol throughout the whole classroom," says Suo Yang, one of the lead researchers. "In comparison, if we move the ventilation to the front, right above the teacher, then the ventilation will create a recirculating zone in the front, which will confine the aerosols within the front 1/3 part of the classroom."

For the classroom case, with strong simulated ventilation, only about 10% of particles were vented out, meaning you can't necessarily bank on a high-quality ventilation system to filter out all the potentially infectious particles in a standard classroom.

A grocery store, meanwhile, was a different story. In the simulated supermarket, 50% of the particles were vented out, according to the computer simulation, with Yang considering that the tall shelving units of a supermarket create small wind channels that more efficiently circulate air through a room.

In both of these scenarios, many of the particles ended up on surfaces, such as the floor and the walls.

"With very strong ventilation, it doesn't mean you get aerosols out. We found the surface deposition is huge. That means the regular cleaning of the surface is important," said Yang.

It is important to note that this study is currently under peer review. Experts caution the study has limits, and its conclusions shouldn't be applied in a diverse set of scenarios. Every classroom, grocery store and elevator is unique, and needs to be specifically evaluated for transmission risk. Nor should the findings that some scenarios offer reduce risk mean that people should replace typical COVID-19 safety measures, such as social distancing and facial coverings.

	<p>"Modeling might be useful but we also need to understand that there are many possible scenarios that can exist for the same indoor space, so modeling all scenarios is not possible," said Rajat Mittal, professor of mechanical engineering at Johns Hopkins University and an expert in fluid dynamics.</p> <p>Nevertheless, Mittal said the results are "in line with what has been found in earlier studies."</p> <p>For Yang, one of the biggest takeaways from his research is that a good ventilation system is not a silver bullet for reducing transmission indoors.</p> <p>"Normally people think ventilation will help. Our observation is, it depends on how the room is set up and where is the ventilation," said Yang. "Sometimes it helps, sometimes it helps the spread out. The key observation is the relative location of the ventilation."</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	07/30 Transgender murders near record high
SOURCE	https://news.trust.org/item/20200730185513-ts0ma/
GIST	<p>LONDON, July 30 (Thomson Reuters Foundation) - Violent deaths of transgender people in the United States are on track to reach a record high this year after two Black trans women were killed in the last week, with advocates blaming a rise in anti-trans rhetoric.</p> <p>Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the largest LGBT+ advocacy group in the United States, has recorded 25 killings this year, which means violent deaths in 2020 are likely to exceed the previous record of 29 in 2017.</p> <p>"As a Black trans woman, I feel absolutely horrified, I feel scared, I feel almost targeted - and I use that word specifically," said Tori Cooper, a director with HRC's transgender justice programme.</p> <p>Queasha D Hardy was fatally shot on Monday in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, while Dior H Ova, also known as Tiffany Harris, died in New York City on Sunday, HRC said, adding the true figures were probably higher as trans deaths were often misreported.</p> <p>Violence against Black trans women, who face discrimination for both their race and gender identity, became the focus of LGBT+ Pride marches in the United States and Britain last month, under the banner Black Trans Lives Matter.</p> <p>There are no official figures to track murders of trans people, who make up about 0.6% of the U.S. population, according to the Williams Institute at ULCA School of Law.</p> <p>Trans Americans experience higher rates of unemployment, poverty and homelessness than others in the LGBT+ community, which puts them at risk, activists say, while President Donald Trump has sought to roll back their legal rights.</p> <p>"Public figures ... who put out violence-diminishing, devaluing rhetoric about trans people, particularly trans women, that just stokes the confusion, the uncertainty around gender in our society," said Raquel Willis, an advocate and writer.</p> <p>"And that in turns stokes the violence that happens to us."</p> <p>Advocates said the rising visibility of Black trans people, such as in TV shows "Pose" and "Orange Is The New Black", may also mean more murders are recorded, while noting many still go unnoticed as only the victim's birth name and sex are reported.</p>

	<p>"I started my medical transition 27 years ago, and I'm 50 years old," said Cooper.</p> <p>"And if I were murdered today ... my family is quite supportive in some ways, but I'm not even sure if my mother would identify to me to a reporter as her daughter or her son."</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 Tumwater police warn of fake officer
SOURCE	https://www.theolympian.com/news/local/crime/article244606312.html
GIST	<p>A person posed as a police officer and conducted a traffic stop in Thurston County Thursday morning, authorities say.</p> <p>About 4 a.m. Thursday, a driver was pulled over by an unmarked, white Crown Victoria with flashing lights after turning south onto Littlerock Road Southwest from 93rd Avenue Southwest, Thurston County Sheriff's Office Sgt. Roland Weiss told The Olympian.</p> <p>The area is on the edge of Tumwater.</p> <p>"Please be alert for a person posing as a police officer," a Facebook post from Tumwater Police Department reads.</p> <p>A man wearing a dark-colored button-up shirt with Seattle police patches reportedly approached the driver's window, Weiss said. However, the driver reported the man was missing a few key props: He did not have a badge, name tag, radio, or gun belt.</p> <p>He asked for her license and registration and told her she and the car she was driving matched the description of a stolen car and its driver, Weiss said. He went back to his car, came back, and returned her license and documents before asking her to step out of the car, according to Weiss.</p> <p>But the driver was feeling uncomfortable, Weiss said, because the uniform didn't look quite right and the "officer" didn't seem to be asking routine questions. She told him she was calling 911 to verify, and he returned to his car and drove away, Weiss said.</p> <p>According to Tumwater PD's post, dispatchers confirmed no traffic stops were happening in that area.</p> <p>The man's car was missing its front license plate, and the driver didn't catch its back license plate number, Weiss said. She reported that the Crown Victoria looked like an old police car somebody might buy at an auction.</p> <p>The driver was described as a white man in his 30s with dark hair and medium build.</p> <p>"If you are ever concerned that an officer who contacts you may not be a real police officer, call 911," the Tumwater Police post reads. "911 dispatchers will be able to verify whether the officer is legitimate. Thurston County law enforcement officers will never be offended if you verify their authenticity."</p> <p>Anyone who sees a car driven by a man matching the description is asked to write down the license plate number and call the Thurston County Sheriff's Office non-emergency line, 360-704-2740.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/31 US Marshals concern: threats to judges
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/slaying-at-us-judges-home-raises-concern-about-cyberthreats/

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — In 2005, U.S. District Judge Joan Lefkow returned from work to find her husband and mother shot dead in the basement of her Chicago home. Investigators initially focused on a White Supremacist who had put out a hit on Lefkow.

But the killer turned out to be someone else entirely: a homeless electrician who had lost a medical malpractice suit in her courtroom. He killed himself when police pulled him over a week later — and found a list of enemy judges, including Lefkow, in his van.

Lefkow was forced to relive her family tragedy this month when a struggling lawyer armed with a gun and a grudge opened fire at the home of another female judge — U.S. District Judge Esther Salas in suburban New Jersey — killing her 20-year-old son and critically wounding her husband.

“It seems to me it’s almost always men, with these obsessions. They act on on them in violent ways. And it ends up in (these) tragedies,” Lefkow, 76, told The Associated Press.

Both attacks, like others against judges, were carried out by men with a weapon and a vendetta. And in both, the assailants were not on law enforcement’s radar. But the latest case adds a dangerous new twist that authorities nationwide have struggled to thwart until it’s too late: the vast misogyny that proliferates online.

Investigators have concluded that a Manhattan lawyer who seethed about women in obsessive online posts targeted Salas on July 19 — and killed a rival lawyer in the men’s rights movement in California a week earlier — before killing himself in rural New York.

Roy Den Hollander had a document with information about a dozen female judges from across the country — half, including Salas, Latina — with him when he was found dead, two people with knowledge of the investigation told the AP. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about the case.

Den Hollander’s anti-feminist screeds go back at least 20 years, when his divorce from a Russian woman he met during a work stint in the country led to years of court filings against her, her lawyer, her workplace and others.

“It was rage against women and it was palpable,” said lawyer Nicholas J. Mundy, who represented Den Hollander’s ex-wife. “If they were successful or had any power over him, he just had a hatred for them, a deep hatred. He would seethe.”

In the years since, the 72-year-old spewed vitriol and sometimes violent imagery about women on his website — deriding his late mother, his ex-wife, friends from childhood and “feminazi” judges in a nearly 2,000-page rant.

The obsessive, unfiltered posts, discovered only after his shooting rampage, alarm those who believe law enforcement must do more to flag the dangerous combination of misogyny, guns and online abuse.

“I’ve been very rattled,” said New York lawyer Carrie Goldberg, who represented some of Harvey Weinstein’s alleged sex assault victims, and has been the subject of frequent online harassment. “There was so much public indication by this man of his hatred toward women, his love of guns, and his particularized angst toward Judge Salas.”

Yet the U.S. Marshals Service, which protects the nation’s approximately 2,700 federal judges, said they were not tracking Den Hollander. Marshals typically keep watch over judges in their courthouses. At home, where many have worked during COVID-19 quarantines, judges mostly rely on training and alarm systems installed after the Lefkow attack.

“Many judges are good at being security minded. But it’s not for everybody. And it’s tough to stay in that condition all the time. Guards go down,” said John Muffler, a former U.S. Marshal who led the agency’s National Center for Judicial Security.

In the wake of the Salas attack, some federal judges and legal scholars interviewed by the AP called for the U.S. Marshals Service to spend more time monitoring such online hate speech. That’s complicated by both the expanse of the internet and the thorny question of when criticism protected by the First Amendment becomes a threat.

The Marshals Service said it reviewed more than 1 million “derogatory” social media posts aimed at people it protects during the last fiscal year. However, feminist scholars and activists believe that misogynistic threats are overlooked and under-prosecuted because there are so many of them.

“This is a person who’s been fantasizing about killing women for years,” said Mary Anne Franks, a University of Miami law professor. “If you have left a paper trail like this, you shouldn’t be allowed to get a weapon.”

Den Hollander’s dossier also included a female oncologist thought to have treated him for what he described in his posts as terminal cancer. The illness apparently led him to step down last year from a gender bias case he had pending before Salas, in which he challenged the U.S. military’s male-only draft registration requirement. Salas let the case proceed to trial — but Den Hollander thought she’d moved it along too slowly.

Muffler believes the cancer diagnosis, if true, was likely the trigger for Den Hollander to act on his revenge fantasies. As with the assailant in the Lefkow case — who had lost his home — it was the final straw.

Attacking a judge “is their way of shifting control back to themselves,” said Muffler, now a security consultant.

While threats against federal judges are increasing, and number some 4,400 a year, physical attacks remain rare, according to the U.S. Marshals Service. But when it happens, Muffler said, it’s usually deadly.

Lefkow thought of resigning after losing her loved ones, but she had a family to support, including two daughters still living at home. And the law, she realized, was her calling.

“It ripped the family apart, but you go forward. And do what you have to do,” said Lefkow, who says she sent a letter expressing her condolences to Salas last week.

“I mean, it’s tragic for this family,” she said. “Losing your only child, that’s the worst thing that can happen.”

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HEADLINE	07/30 Feds indict 2 ex-Mexico police officials
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/former-mexican-police-officials-indicted-in-new-york-11596157418?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1
GIST	<p>MEXICO CITY—Two former senior Mexican police officials, top aides of the man who ran the country’s drug war for six years, were indicted Thursday in New York on charges of taking millions of dollars in bribes from the Sinaloa Cartel in exchange for protection and allowing tons of its cocaine to flow through Mexico unhindered.</p> <p>Luis Cárdenas Palomino and Ramón Pequeño were charged with three counts of cocaine trafficking conspiracy.</p>

“In exchange for multimillion-dollar bribes, the defendants allegedly permitted the Sinaloa Cartel to operate with impunity in Mexico,” the U.S. attorney’s office for the Eastern District of New York said in a statement. It added that the two are “presently fugitives.”

The charges against Messrs. Cárdenas Palomino and Pequeño were added to a superseding indictment against Genaro García Luna, their former boss. Mr. García Luna, who had been living in Florida since leaving government service in 2012, was arrested in 2019 and is in prison awaiting trial in New York.

The indictments are part of Mexico’s largest drug-related corruption scandal since the 1997 arrest of the country’s drug czar, Gen. Jesús Gutiérrez Rebollo, who was found guilty of taking bribes from what was at the time Mexico’s most powerful cartel and sentenced to 40 years in jail. He died in prison in 2013.

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has cited the alleged corruption of Mr. García Luna and others in arguing against what he says was a failed policy to address a drug war that has left more than 200,000 people dead and 70,000 missing since 2007.

Critics have questioned Mr. López Obrador’s policy of “hugs not bullets,” and his refusal to take a hard line against the country’s cartels.

Mr. García Luna, who for years worked closely with U.S. law enforcement, embodied Mexico’s antidrug effort for nearly a decade, first as head of Mexico’s version of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and then as public security minister from 2006 to 2012 under President Felipe Calderón.

The three men were charged after information surfaced in the 2019 New York trial of Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán, the former head of the Sinaloa Cartel, implicating Mr. García Luna. During the trial, a witness testified that he had handed Mr. García Luna \$3 million in cartel money in a suitcase, something Mr. García Luna denied at the time.

The superseding indictment said Mr. García Luna facilitated six shipments of cocaine totaling 50,000 kilograms between 2002 and 2007, and twice accepted suitcases with million-dollar cash payments.

Mr. Pequeño was head of the antinarcotics division of Mexico’s Federal Police, a body created by Mr. García Luna who was tasked by Mr. Calderón with creating an honest and efficient police force able to take down the country’s powerful cartels. Mr. Pequeño was the head of police intelligence when Mr. Guzman made a famous prison break in 2015. Mr. Pequeño was fired after the escape.

He didn’t respond Thursday to a telephone call and a message seeking comment. Mr. Cárdenas Palomino couldn’t be reached for comment.

Mr. Cárdenas Palomino is a former Mexican intelligence agent who spent more than 15 years in federal law enforcement, including as head of regional security for Mexico’s federal police force from 2009 to 2013.

According to his LinkedIn profile, Mr. Cárdenas Palomino most recently served as general director of Adamantium Private Security Services, a company that is part of Grupo Salinas, the conglomerate controlled by billionaire retail and broadcasting mogul Ricardo Salinas Pliego. A spokesman for Grupo Salinas said late Thursday that Mr. Cárdenas considered the charges false, but had requested a leave of absence from Adamantium, “confident that he will demonstrate his innocence and justice will be served.”

Mr. Salinas Pliego, Mexico’s second-richest man, is a close ally of President López Obrador. The businessman attended a dinner at the White House with the president this month and served on Mr. López Obrador’s business advisory panel.

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SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/30/world/asia/pakistan-blasphemy-killing-american.html?action=click&module=Latest&pgtype=Homepage
GIST	<p>The United States urged Pakistan on Thursday to overhaul the country's harsh blasphemy laws a day after an American citizen accused of violating them was fatally shot in a courtroom.</p> <p>The brazen killing has brought into sharp focus Pakistan's much-maligned blasphemy laws, which critics say are often used to persecute and intimidate members of religious minorities.</p> <p>The American, Tahir Ahmad Naseem, 57, was on trial in the northwestern Pakistani city of Peshawar on charges that he had claimed to be a prophet. Mr. Naseem was shot six times on Wednesday by a young man whom the authorities identified only as Faisal, 19, a local resident.</p> <p>The killing, in a courtroom at the Peshawar Judicial Complex, drew strong condemnation from the U.S. government.</p> <p>"We extend our condolences to the family of Tahir Naseem, the American citizen who was killed today inside a courtroom in Pakistan," the State Department's Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs said in a Twitter post on Thursday. "We urge Pakistan to take immediate action and pursue reforms that will prevent such a shameful tragedy from happening again."</p> <p>Mr. Naseem was accused of blasphemy in 2018 on charges that carried penalties ranging from fines to death.</p> <p>He had been a member of the Ahmadi sect, which has been declared heretical under the Pakistani Constitution and whose members face repeated persecution. However, representatives said Mr. Naseem had left the sect and had claimed to be the messiah and a prophet.</p> <p>Blasphemy is a highly combustible and sensitive subject in Pakistan, with emotions flaring over mere rumors that Islam has been insulted. The government has never executed anyone under blasphemy laws, but people accused of it are often killed by mobs even before the police can take action, rights groups say.</p> <p>Soon after the killing of Mr. Naseem, a video of the gunman was widely shared on social media. It showed him sitting on a courtroom bench while being held by police officers, and he is heard saying the Prophet Muhammad told him in a dream to kill Mr. Naseem.</p> <p>"He is an enemy of Islam," the gunman is heard saying of Mr. Naseem. "He is an enemy of Pakistan."</p> <p>Police officials said they were investigating how the attacker managed to bring a gun inside the high-security court compound.</p> <p>Rights activists and rights groups have long campaigned against the blasphemy laws, saying they are used to oppress religious minorities and to settle personal feuds.</p> <p>But hard-line Islamic religious parties have bitterly opposed moves to amend the laws. Mainstream political leaders acknowledge the misuse of the blasphemy laws, but have mostly caved in to the pressures by religious parties not to change them and have dithered in taking a public stand against them.</p> <p>In 2011, Salmaan Taseer, a prominent politician who was then the governor of Punjab Province, had campaigned to change the blasphemy laws, but was fatally shot by his police guard.</p> <p>Mr. Taseer had been campaigning for the release of Asia Bibi, a Pakistani Christian woman who was sentenced to death and imprisoned for eight years after being accused of blasphemy. The Supreme Court overturned her conviction in 2018, and she now lives in Canada.</p>

	The killing of Mr. Taseer was a chilling reminder of the dangers that outspoken secular politicians face in a deeply conservative and religious Pakistani society.
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HEADLINE	07/30 Texas police under gunfire; active shooter
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/texas-police-take-gunfire-in-bordertown-standoff-3-kids-believed-inside-home-reports
GIST	<p>Police officers in Mission, Texas, came under fire Thursday evening when they responded to reports of an active shooter in the city along the U.S.-Mexico border.</p> <p>Multiple police vehicles were at the scene and authorities believed there were three children inside the home where the gunman was barricaded, The Monitor of nearby McAllen, Texas, reported.</p> <p>One boy was transported to a hospital from the scene with undisclosed injuries, the newspaper reported.</p> <p>“Supposedly it’s a family disturbance that has gone wild,” Mission Mayor Armando Cana told the newspaper.</p> <p>The mayor said the initial responding officers were fired upon around 9:30 p.m. local time and backup units were quickly called to the scene.</p> <p>No law enforcement officers were believed to be wounded, KVEO-TV of Brownsville reported.</p>
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HEADLINE	07/30 Chicago: 3 cops shot outside police station
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/chicago-cop-shooting
GIST	<p>Three Chicago police officers were shot Thursday morning while taking a violent carjacking suspect into custody outside a police station on the city’s West Side, authorities said.</p> <p>The suspect also was shot after the gunfire erupted around 9:40 a.m. in the Belmont Cragin neighborhood outside the 25th District police station, Chicago Police Supt. David Brown told reporters outside Illinois Masonic Medical Center.</p> <p>The suspect fired multiple gunshots at police during the arrest, Brown said, striking several officers.</p> <p>One officer suffered a gunshot wound to his chin and neck, and also was hit in his bulletproof vest, Brown said. A second officer was struck in the vest. A third officer suffered a gunshot wound to his hip. Two other officers suffered chest pains and were hospitalized.</p> <p>The first officer was rushed to Illinois Masonic Medical Center. Dr. Stephen Kingsley, a trauma surgeon, told reporters the officer was given a breathing tube and doctors were working to stabilize him.</p> <p>The four other officers were being treated at Loyola Hospital, Brown said. The suspect was taken to Stoger Hospital for treatment.</p> <p>Brown emphasized the dangers all Chicago police officers experience every day while protecting the city’s residents.</p> <p>“When they leave home, they leave their loved ones and put these stars on and risk everything, they risk everything protecting all of us,” he said.</p> <p>Brown said the shooting is under investigation and more details would be released at a later time.</p>

HEADLINE	07/30 Mexico: US treaty protests turn violent
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/vehicles-burned-mexico-protest-us-water-payment-72075617
GIST	<p>MEXICO CITY -- Demonstrators in northern Mexico have burned several government vehicles, blocked railway tracks and set afire a government office and highway tollbooths to protest water payments to the United States.</p> <p>Mexico has fallen behind in the amount of water it must send north from its dams under a 1944 treaty, but farmers in the northern state of Chihuahua want the water for their own crops.</p> <p>President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said Thursday that the protests were being fanned by opposition politicians for their own motives. He said there was enough water to comply with the treaty and support local crops.</p> <p>“Some people are taking advantage now for their own benefit ... opposition politicians, in this case,” López Obrador said.</p> <p>The president criticized “the attitude of confrontation” and the burning of federal property, and promised “the farmers, the inhabitants will not lack water.” And he noted that further west along the border — notably in the Colorado River basin — Mexico receives four times more water from the United States than it gives under the treaty.</p> <p>The protests appeared to be centered in the town of Delicias, Chihuahua, near one of the dams where water is being released to flow northward. Federal forces guarding the dam gates have clashed with protesters in recent weeks.</p> <p>Photos from Delicias showed that demonstrators used heavy equipment to drag pickup trucks belonging to the national water commission to nearby train tracks where they were flipped over and and set afire. Someone, apparently demonstrators, also set fire to a building where the commission has its offices, and flames ravaged a series of toll booths on a nearby highway.</p> <p>Under the 1944 treaty, Mexico owes the United States about 405,000 acre-feet (500 million cubic meters) this year that must be paid by Oct. 24. Payment is made by releasing water from dams in Mexico. Mexico has fallen badly behind in payments from previous years and now has to quickly catch up on water transfers.</p> <p>The expansion of water-hungry crops has meant that Mexico has used 71% of the northward-flowing Conchos River, while under the treaty it should use only 62% of the water, letting the rest of it flow into the Rio Bravo, also known as the Rio Grande, on the border.</p> <p>In the past, Mexico has delayed payments, hoping that periodic tropical storms from the Gulf would create occasional windfalls of water. But while Hanna made landfall in Texas earlier this month, the storm's rains did not reach far enough inland to fill dams in Chihuahua.</p> <p>The water commission noted ruefully that, “Even though Tropical Storm Hanna recently reached the northeast of the country, the international dams (those involved in the treaty) did not recover the desired volume, as the increased flow occurred downstream.”</p> <p>The issue has resulted in clashes before.</p> <p>In March, protesters burned pickup trucks, blocked roads and demonstrated at the La Boquilla dam, also in Chihuahua.</p>

	<p>Earlier this year, López Obrador said there was enough water both for local farmers and payments to the United States.</p> <p>“We do not want an international conflict,” the president said. “Treaties have to be lived up to. If we have signed a treaty, we have to comply with it.”</p>
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